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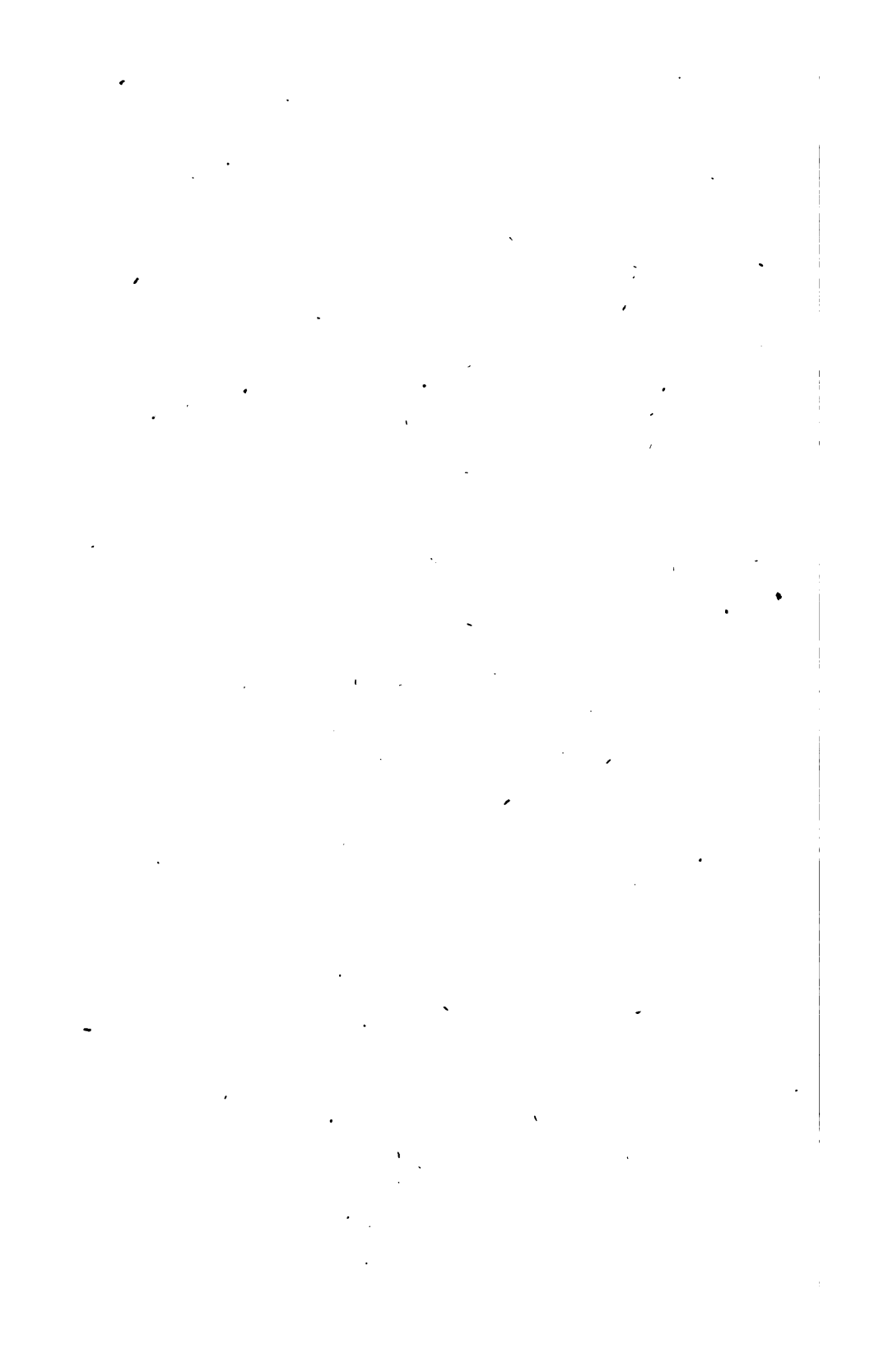
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SHINING AFTER RAIN

OR THE SISTER'S VOW.

VOLUME II.

SHINING AFTER RAIN

OR

The Sister's Vow.

A TALE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL II.



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SHINING AFTER RAIN;

OR,

THE SISTER'S VOW.

CHAPTER I.

"Not e'en the tenderest heart, and next our own,
Knows half the reasons why we smile and sigh."

KEBLE.

NEARLY two years had passed away since Captain Leslie parted with his betrothed. The war was still prolonged, and Edith would have felt weary at his long absence, had not her time been too fully occupied to leave much leisure to dwell on herself and her own thoughts.

Annie had again been attacked by the rheumatic fever, which, when once it appears, is too often of frequent recurrence. The bright, beautiful, and thoughtless girl, was much altered

in outward appearance, and Edith hoped that some inward change had taken place, but Annie now was reserved on the subject of her own thoughts and feelings. She no longer appeared annoyed when Edith, or her sisters, introduced serious topics, but never gave expression to her own opinions at such times. Alice's music and society seemed to be the most agreeable to her, but her manner was affectionate and kind to all, though the sadness which now pervaded her pale and delicate countenance, pained her family and friends. Love and tenderness failed to remove it; indeed though they overpowered the invalid with gratitude, they appeared only to increase her melancholy.

It was the first of May. The sun shone brightly; only a few fleecy cloudlets were visible on the clear blue sky, the birds were singing sweetly, as if greeting the arrival of spring, and the scent of flowers on the balmy air filled the pretty sitting-room with fragrance.

On a couch, near the bow window, which opened into the flower-garden, lay a fair girl, reclining on cushions. She had been working, a pretty little spotted print frock lay on a table beside her, but now one of her wasted, snow-

white hands partly supported her head, and shaded her face.

"The sun is shining on you, dear Annie, why did you not tell me so ; I have been so absorbed in my writing, I fear, that I have neglected to remark it before," said Janet, who now arranged the green Venetian blinds so as to shield her sister's head from the hot rays of the sun.

"Thank you, dearest," replied the invalid, "I am quite comfortable now, and yet the cheering sunbeams are not excluded from the room, I cannot bear to lose them, on a dull day I always feel so much more sad."

"I think almost every one's spirits are more or less influenced by weather, but especially is it the case with an invalid," rejoined her sister, "for they are more dependent on it for their enjoyments."

"Have you finished your letter, Janet, and can you spare time for a little chat before you go out this morning?" inquired Annie.

"Oh, as long as you like, dearest, I am not going out till the afternoon ; I promised the school-children to wait at home to see their garlands, and desired them all to come to your

window, and I dare say we shall have some more still," replied her elder sister.

"There have been some very pretty ones," rejoined the invalid, "but I admired little Lucy Grant's the most; it was all white and green, and looked so innocent, just like her little sister's face, and her own, it made me long to be a child like her again, without sin and sorrow," and Annie sighed deeply.

"Yes, it was very pretty, and seemed an index of her pure and gentle heart; she is one of the best children in the whole parish," rejoined Janet, "but still not free from sin, dear Annie; she could not go to heaven, if it pleased God to take her, without being first washed in the blood of her Saviour, to be fit to wear a spotless robe in his presence above, and it is as easy to His mighty power, to cleanse away the sins, even be they red like crimson, of two-and-twenty years as of seven. The same fountain is freely open to all who seek it, none need fear rejection there! 'Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.'"

There was a pause in the conversation for some minutes, then the invalid spoke again.

"What would I not give to feel the happy

confidence in all this that dear Alice possesses. I love to hear her speak of these things as a pleasing dream, but I feel she could not comprehend my thoughts and doubts, and if she could, I would not ruffle her peace with a breath of my unhappiness."

"But why should you, dear Annie, remain unhappy, when all around you on earth, and your Heavenly Friend above, long to see you otherwise?" answered her sister.

"How can I know that last?" asked Annie; "if I could prove by my activity and exertions, in all that would please my parents, whom I have vexed for so many years, indeed all my life, the sincerity of my repentance to them, and by giving myself up to God's service, show to Him my intention of serving Him for the future, then I could hope for mercy, and find rest to my soul, but now I lie helpless and useless. It is easy to say what we would do, when we are unable to do it. It is like a death-bed repentance, which, I think, must always be too terribly doubtful to give any comfort," and the young girl covered her face with her hands, and through her slender fingers Janet presently saw the tears trickle gently down.

"Dearest Annie," she gently said, "peace is by your side, but you see it not. Believe me, if you were hearty and strong, and could become a sister of charity, build and endow churches, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the captive in his dungeon, or die a martyr at the stake, under your present view, you could not find anything but a false peace, which would fail you at the last."

"Then what do you mean? How can I trust my deceitful heart? How else prove to myself, and to God, my sincerity?" asked the sick girl, eagerly. "Has He not said, that by the fulfilment or omission of such duties, we shall be judged at the last day, in the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew?"

"Yes, dearest; but it is in the spirit in which all such must be performed that the whole depends; it must not be to win heaven for ourselves, or to give us a more exalted opinion of ourselves. When the same gracious Being promised that the bestowal of a cup of water should not be without its reward, was it for the deed itself? No, it was only if given in 'His Name,' that is to say, from love to Him, not to *earn* His love: and, Annie, if you will go to

Him simply, He can, and will, give you peace, and thus only can you work out your own salvation, 'for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.'"

After a little more conversation, Janet left her sister alone, first placing in her hands a small volume, "Passages in the Life of a Daughter at Home," saying,—“I have read this with much pleasure, and I think it may meet many of your difficulties better than I can, dear Annie.”

The subject was not resumed for some days, and then the invalid expressed a wish to see the Rector. The gentle old man's interviews were now often repeated, and gradually brought her to the haven where she would be. It was in the end of the same month that the sisters were again spending a morning together, but the expression of the invalid's face was no longer sad, though graver and more thoughtful than in former years.

“Janet,” said her sister, “you must not defer your marriage any longer on my account, I cannot bear to interfere with yours and Horace's happiness; but for me, and my illness, you would have brightened his home a

year ago. No, you must hear me," she continued, as she saw her sister about to speak, "I can now be happy without you, though I shall miss your companionship; dear mamma and I can understand each other now, and it shall be my chief object, as long as I am spared, to give her any pleasure in my power, it is the least I can do after all my ingratitude to her; it will please her to be necessary to my comfort, which, whilst you are here, she feels keenly that she is not."

"I have sometimes feared she was sensitive on that score, and have tried," said Janet, "to avoid any occasion of paining her, but often between my wish to serve you both, I fear may have done so."

"The fault has not been with you, dear Janet, in such cases, but with me, and I trust I shall endeavour to keep a guard over myself, and not grieve her so in future," replied Annie; "and I should like to see your wedding; will you fix it for the twenty-third of June, my birthday? I know I shall have Horace on my side, I mean to write to him—you won't be jealous?" said she, with something of the archness of her olden smiles.

"No, dearest; but do you think you shall feel strong enough then, to bear the excitement of even a very quiet wedding, such as you know ours is to be?"

"As strong, dearest, as I ever expect to be," answered Annie, "but there is another I should like to live to witness, but, perhaps, it may not be—I mean dear Miss Howard's. What a life of self-sacrifice has hers been, and yet not an unhappy one, of late, at least, for it has been an offering of love. How much we all have to thank her, for certainly she brought a blessing with her into this house."

"Yes, indeed," replied Janet, "her influence for good may descend to many generations. I wish the war was over, that Captain Leslie might return to claim his bride. I really think he is worthy of her, and that is the highest compliment I can pay him, or he would wish for, if I mistake not. Horace is so much pleased with her brother, whom he met at Brighton. He says he is not only clever and agreeable, but one of the highest-principled young men he ever met with," continued she; "I am very glad he has taken such a fancy to him, and thus confirmed the opinion we formed

of Herbert Howard, when he was here last Christmas."

"I am sorry," rejoined Annie, "that he is leaving Oxford just as our two younger brothers are going there, a steady friend would have been of great advantage to them, but especially to Harry. Has anything ever occurred to you about Herbert Howard besides?" asked she of her sister.

"No, Annie; what do you mean, you look mysterious?"

"Oh, it might be only a fancy, I was an idler and a looker on whilst you were better employed in taking care of and entertaining other people," said Annie, "and of course I would not have it breathed to any one else—but I certainly fancied he was very much taken up with poor dear Alice. No one can help admiring her sweet face; to look at her is to love her, and I feared lest it might be so with him, and she always listened to and entered into conversation with him with such evident pleasure; but it may have been only a reverence and pity for her affliction that caused the tenderness and gentleness which I observed in his manners towards her."

"I hope so," replied Janet, "and I would not for the world let dear Edie" (for so she often called her former governess) "guess at such a possibility, as it would certainly deprive both Alice and herself of much anticipated pleasure, as I know mamma has promised that after her marriage with Captain Leslie, Alice shall often stay with her, and this she would think it right to forego if she suspected anything of the sort, and it may be only imaginary after all."

The invalid's wish was complied with, and Herbert arrived to be present at the quiet and happy wedding, and to pass a few days at Langley Park before he escorted his sister to Brighton, where she always spent a few weeks every year with her old friend, Mrs. Sinclair; after which he was going to reside with a clergyman to teach and also to learn to prepare two youths for college, and to learn parochial duties from their father, a zealous parish priest.

Mrs. Harcourt felt the loss of her eldest daughter's assistance in many ways, but any void was soon filled up in her now constant attendance upon and companionship with her once favourite child. Alice was more her

father's daughter, he dated his true happiness from her, and his richly cultivated mind could best commune with hers.

"Dear mamma," said Annie, a few days before Edith's return, "I do hope Captain Leslie will not be much longer delayed at the Cape."

"It would be most ungrateful to wish otherwise," replied Mrs. Harcourt, "but his gain will be our loss; we have had our kind friend so long that we shall hardly know what to do without her help now, she has become to your father and myself as a younger sister. I owe her more than I can ever repay, for she has gained for me and given me my children's love, hiding my many faults and infirmities from their eyes, and by her gentle influence and example making me more worthy of their affection."

"But, dear mamma, I have been thinking of a plan which Alice and I should both so much like, if you would agree to it and lend us your help," said Annie, "which would I hope prevent any greater evil resulting from dear Edie's departure than our own loss of the pleasure of her society; of course we have not hinted anything of the sort to Amy and Flora before

asking your approval ; but Alice agrees with me that they will fall into the arrangement quite pleasantly."

"Well, what is this delightful scheme which makes my darling Annie's eyes look so bright, and brings the colour to her dear cheeks?" asked Mrs. Harcourt, fondly kissing her daughter's brow.

"It is this, dearest mamma; we hope you will permit Alice and myself to complete Amy and Flora's schoolroom education, instead of having a governess again, for we have all so long ceased to regard our dear friend in that light, that we should not like the introduction of a stranger amongst us, and," added she, "it would be such a happiness to me to feel myself a useful member of society, and especially to be of any use to you, mamma."

"I see but one objection to your plan, my child," replied Mrs. Harcourt, "which is, that I fear it will entail more fatigue than you are equal to undergo in your present delicate state; but we will hope you may get stronger before your exertions are required."

"Oh, thank you, mamma, you need not fear anything for me," answered Annie, "I shall

only have to hear the girls read—to correct their exercises and superintend their drawing. Alice of course will undertake the music and singing, and be the German and Italian mistress also; and you will, we hope, take Miss Howard's place and superintend the Scriptural reading, with which the studies are always opened."

To all of this Mrs. Harcourt gave a willing assent. Annie felt and knew that if her life were spared, she should in all probability be an invalid, often a suffering one, and pass the remainder of her days chiefly on the sofa. She had earnestly requested the physician, who had been called in, to tell her privately his true opinion, and he had done so, informing her that unless she caught cold on the chest, and thus brought on decline, she might and probably would live many years, though, he feared, she would always be more or less subject to the rheumatic affection, and subsequent neuralgia, from which she was then suffering. She begged him not to communicate this to her mother, and she herself only told her what would relieve her anxiety, namely, that she was in no immediate

danger whatsoever, and only required care to secure her against it.

Annie was gradually but surely learning what is denominated, in a very excellent little book,* "Waiting work," and had discovered that even

"In disappointment (He) can bless,
So love at heart prevail."

and found, even on her couch, much also of "Warfare work" still to do; of this there is and must be in abundance for each Christian heart on the bed of pain, or amongst the busy scenes of life, for where is the heart that hath not its own peculiar foe, its one or more besetting sins? and besides this inward conflict, all have more or less an outward one to maintain with contending duties, perplexing difficulties, with cares, anxieties, strifes, or sorrows. Annie's former thirst for excitement and desire for admiration had subsided into the wish expressed in her now favourite lines—

"I ask thee for a thoughtful love,
Through constant watchings wise;
To meet the glad with joyful smiles,
And wipe the weeping eyes,
And a heart at leisure from itself
To soothe and sympathize."

* "Work : plenty to do and how to do it."

There was much about her youngest sister in common with herself and her own natural disposition, which made Annie anxious to prevent evil ensuing from the loss of her present judicious monitor, and she trusted that her own dear bought experience might have some weight whilst teaching the ways of wisdom to Flora.

CHAPTER II.

"A scene of death ! where fires beneath the sun,
And blended arms, and white pavilions glow,
And for the business of destruction done
Its requiem the war-horn seemed to blow."

CAMPBELL.

A FEW days after Edith's return to her post, an account appeared in the newspapers of a severe engagement with the Kaffirs, in which the British arms had been victorious, but with considerable loss in killed and wounded. The Harcourt family resolved to keep the intelligence secret, till a list of the sufferers appeared, as expected, in the next day's paper, thus saving her the agony of suspense. Their kind precautions were rewarded by the arrival of a letter for Edith from Edward, now Major Leslie, and thus she first received the account of his being amongst the wounded from his own considerate pen, instead of reading it in *The Times*.

He wrote thankfully for having been spared whilst many of his friends and comrades had fallen around him to rise no more in this world, and begged Edith not to be over anxious about him. He had, whilst leading his men forward early in the day, received a trifling flesh wound ; but whilst bringing the regiment out of action, which duty had devolved on him in consequence of his superior officers being killed or placed *hors de combat*, he was severely wounded in the leg by a gun-shot ; amputation had been deemed necessary above the ankle ; but all was doing well, and he and many others were to leave for England immediately. " Otherwise," added he, " I should have claimed your promise of coming out to nurse me, but now I must ask you to be ready to take upon you, on my arrival in England, the duties and troubles of a wife."

To this last proposal Edith was in no ways disinclined, and her friends immediately offered their assistance in her preparation. The *trousseau* Mrs. Harcourt insisted on undertaking altogether, claiming this pleasure as the right of an elder sister, for in that light she trusted she would always regard her. In one point they all hoped not to be disappointed, and as the

transit from London was short and easy, they thought Major Leslie's invalided state would not interfere with their wish—that the wedding should take place as quietly as they desired, but at Langley Park, where Edith had gained the love of all around her.

“Thank you, dear Mrs. Harcourt,” replied Edith, for all this kindness, it is very grateful to an orphan's heart; and when dear Edward arrives your wishes shall be mentioned to him, and will, I am sure, be complied with, unless there is any insuperable obstacle to the plan of which we are not now aware.”

“Nothing, dear Edith, for now we must all be allowed to drop any more formal name,” said Mrs. Harcourt; “nothing we can ever do for you can repay our debt of gratitude for the blessing you have been to us all, especially to our dear blind girl. When first I met you in London, and told you of her miserable state, how little did I dream that she would ever have become the happy, bright being she now is, diffusing peace and pleasure all around her. I fear she will naturally miss you more than we shall, and to us all your departure must be a great blank.”

"I should be sorry, though it seems selfish to say so, not to be missed by those I love, and have so long dwelt among, dear Mrs. Harcourt," replied Edith, "but I hope, as dear Alice has her mind so well stored, and possesses so many resources in her various talents, that she will not suffer so much as you kindly think, from the loss of my companionship."

"And what do you think of Annie and Alice's scheme in the schoolroom?" asked Mrs. Harcourt; "I suppose they have mentioned it to you."

"Yes; they told me, also, with much pleasure," replied Edith, "that you had given a most kind and ready consent to their wishes. I think it is a very desirable arrangement, as it will afford occupation and interest to both of them of the best and highest sort, for the next two years, at least. Amy is most docile, and never gives trouble to any one; and Flora, though very different in temper and disposition, is so fond of Annie, and has such an intense reverence for dear Alice's goodness, that she will not, I think and hope, give you any cause for anxiety."

Edith felt deeply thankful that all had been so mercifully ordained for her; but yet she waited

anxiously and eagerly the arrival of the steamer bringing home the invalids from the seat of war. Mr. and Mrs. Harcourt accompanied her to Portsmouth, to meet Edward Leslie, on the day of disembarkation. The sea-voyage had benefitted his general health, and, but for the sight of the crutches, her joy would have been complete—alloy must be mixed with even the purest delights on earth—were it not so,

“Weak mortals all entranced on earth would lie,
Nor listen for those purer strains above.”

One day's rest at Portsmouth was deemed advisable by the surgeon before proceeding to London; and much there was to be heard and told by both parties. Edith's friends would have urged Major Leslie to come direct to Langley Park; but pleasant as such an arrangement would have been to all concerned, Edward was obliged to decline the kind invitation, knowing that his old uncle would be hurt if he now made any other house his home on his first arrival in England. Mr. and Mrs. Harcourt, therefore, decided to spend a week in London, which would give Edith the opportunity of being introduced to her future husband's family, which he much desired.

What strange changes had taken place since the time when he first contemplated matrimony, twelve years ago ; and how infinitely obliged he now felt to his uncle for having, by his angry disinheritance of him, saved him from wedding misery in the person of Eleanor Merton ;—for misery it must have resulted in, to be chained for life to a woman without heart, affection, or principle ; the consummate actress before marriage and in public, when no longer actuated by the motive for deceit, would have appeared unmasked in all her poverty of mind and want of all those qualities which alone can render married life happy in the hall or in the cottage. On what mere trifles how often does happiness or misery turn ! Nothing seems to be held too small or insignificant to take a part in the vast machinery of this world by its Maker, as if to teach us what Dr. Chalmers calls the power of *littles*.

That envelope of Adeline's, what many and various consequences had followed the finding of it by Sir Henry ! and thus, that which appeared at first to be an unfortunate accident, resulted in the happiness and blessing of many.

“Trifles form the sum of human things,” has

been well and wisely said by one who gave heed to them ; and yet how much of wrong and misery too often arises from their neglect. A careless remark, a thoughtless action, soon forgotten by the individual who has spoken the one, or committed the other, may yet bear fruits in after generations. We are too apt to forget that when we are, perhaps, least aware of it, our deeds and words may be helping or hindering an immortal soul on the way to life everlasting. If we more thoroughly realised this truth, and felt it to be a serious one, that we thus know not, and, in all probability, never shall know, all the consequences for good or evil of our own actions, we should less frequently give way to the temptation of leaving this undone, or just doing that, because they are such trifles. It may be the turning-point in another's life, who may never lose the impression then made by our conduct, and in whom the tendency towards what is right may be uncertain, that a look or a word will be sometimes enough to make them falter or stumble on their way. The responsibility of influence, from which not a single man or woman in possession of their full faculties of mind is free, we cannot lay down, and are unable to

get quit of. As it is beautifully expressed in
"Parish Musings :"—

"The things which most mere trifles deem,
A walk, a ride, a book, a dream,
A pain, a laugh, a tear,
All come with their commission high
To mould man for eternity,
By growth in goodness here.
And they who own this heavenly law,
Strength from all little things can draw
For great things yet to come,
For holy triumphs, which may prove
Their depth of faith, their height of love,
And fit them for their home."

CHAPTER III

"A guardian angel o'er his life presiding,
Doubling his pleasure."

WARM and hearty was the welcome Edward Leslie received in Cambridge Square, and well did he deserve it of the inmates, having brought peace and comfort into that house. Two years had scarcely told on Sir Henry's looks, for he now was happy instead of miserable; was tenderly and assiduously cared for by his affectionate daughter, instead of being worried by strangers, and for loneliness, had exchanged the bright atmosphere of his grandchildren's joyous childhood. He was proud of his nephew's gallantry—it added another laurel to the name of Leslie; and the day on which he expected him to arrive, Adeline could with difficulty con-

vince her father, that everything had been thought of and arranged, for the comfort of the coming guest. A dozen times did the old man take his stick and hobble along the corridor, to see for himself that his nephew's apartments were duly and rightly prepared. The bell was rung again and again to give some order to ensure every requisite being furnished for the invalided officer, and to desire that every proper attention should be paid to his servant also. The low carriage was sent to the railway station, as most easy to step into, with Louis Bouillé to meet his cousin ; and the clock was appealed to every ten minutes, and its correctness doubted, as the old man found the time prolonged beyond his expectation for the return of the equipage and its valuable and longed-for freight. The irregularity of the trains was commented on with great severity ; the dinner hour altered, in case of his nephew's non-arrival by the right train—but suspense, like all other tiresome things, comes to an end at last ; and soon after five o'clock, the hall bell was heard.

“ Adeline, go and see that stupid fellow, John, does not keep them waiting half an hour before he answers the bell,” said Sir Henry.

In a few minutes, the sound of crutches was audible on the stairs, and soon after Major Leslie entered the drawing-room.

"My dear boy," said the old man, "I would have gone down to meet you, but Adeline would have her way—women always will; and she said, as you must come up to your own apartments, I had better stay here to receive you. The sun has bronzed your face, but you look better than I expected."

"Oh, I am already much better in health. The sea-breezes have recruited me wonderfully; but they could not give me a new foot and ankle. I am glad to see you looking so hale, uncle; you seem to have grown younger since we last met," rejoined his nephew.

"Yes, I am hearty for my years, Edward; but I think they should do something for you, my boy, and I dare say they will soon. I should like to see you colonel before I die," said Sir Henry.

"Well, then, I hope you will, sir; I have only two majors above me in the regiment, and the senior lieutenant-colonel is about to retire, from ill health," replied Edward.

The evening passed away in answering the

many inquiries of Sir Henry and his cousin, respecting the late scenes he had witnessed. Before parting for the night, the old man said—

“The handsome Major Leslie will make more conquests with his one foot, I prophesy, than he has done whilst in possession of both; he will be worshipped as a hero now by the fair sex.”

“I think you will not be a true seer this time, uncle,” said his nephew, smiling; “but, good-night, I will tell you my reasons for thinking so to-morrow.”

“Sly fox! have you been taking a Kaffir bride?” asked his uncle, merrily.

“I am not going to satisfy any curiosity to-night,” replied Edward, in the same strain, as he left the room.

“Have you any clue, Adeline?” asked Sir Henry, who, though man and not woman, possessed curiosity; indeed, this quality, were statistics taken, would be found to exist in as full a degree in the stronger as in the weaker sex.

“None,” replied his daughter; “but I know that he seemed most anxious to return to Langley Park for the last days of his stay in England, before he embarked for the Cape; it is the resi-

dence of a Mr. and Mrs. Harcourt, people of wealth and good family, I have understood."

The next morning, as he expected, Edward was assailed at all points with inquiries respecting his innuendo of the previous evening.

"I must take it as a great compliment, your taking up your residence here," observed his uncle, "whilst your heart is at Langley Park."

Edward looked surprised, but replied—"You are mistaken; it is not there now; the lady I wish to introduce to you as your future niece is in London, and met me with her friends at Portsmouth."

"I hope she is good enough for you, my boy; and then she shall be welcome here as soon as you please," replied his uncle.

Major Leslie felt doubtful how the idea of her late station in life might be taken by Sir Henry, and thought it better to leave it unmentioned till he had prepossessed him in her favour first.

"For goodness, uncle," he replied, "it were not easy to find her fellow, and she is of gentle birth, if you mean the word in that sense, for she is nearly the last descendant of the old Howards, of Harrington Court."

"Ah! what became of them?—my memory

fails me; did not something happen to the last Mr. Howard?" inquired the Baronet.

"He was ruined by the frauds practised on that large bank in Ireland about twelve years ago, died suddenly, and his fine old estates were brought to the hammer," replied his nephew.

"Had he no son, then, to inherit them?" asked Sir Henry.

"Yes, one; but the late Mr. Howard was the last in the entail, sir, and so the boy could not preserve the property; he is now about to enter holy orders, and took a double first at Oxford—a most talented and excellent young man, I assure you," rejoined Edward, warmly, "and one whom I shall be proud to possess as a brother."

"Well, but I want to hear more about the sister," answered his uncle, humorously; "as she, and not he, is to be my niece, I suppose she is not handsome, as you have only spoken of her goodness."

"I will leave you to judge for yourself, sir, as tastes differ on nothing so much as beauty, and my opinion cannot be an impartial one; suffice it to say, I never see any other face equal to her's in my eyes; but so it ought to be, of course.

She is the half-sister of the Lady Castleton, from whom you saved me, sir, and to whose real character you opened my eyes, twelve years ago. Had I not been intentionally misled, and taught to believe her beyond reach, because engaged to another, I do not think I should ever have made the mistake I did between the two sisters," continued Major Leslie.

"From your account, Miss Howard must be a being of different mould from the Viscountess," replied Sir Henry; "and I trust you have not erred in judgment a second time; but how has she escaped the influence and contagion of her half-sister's society, for she is one of the most heartless and dissipated women in the fashionable world?"

"I do not wonder at your inquiry and very reasonable doubts, my dear sir," replied his nephew; "for I would, indeed, hesitate to take a wife from any companions of Eleanor Castleton. The facts are simply these—My Edith has never seen that proud, heartless woman since her father's death, and when left penniless by misfortune, instead of sinking under the blow, roused her every energy, and resolved, if God would grant her health and strength to educate

and bring up her young brother in a manner worthy of his name and birth, and how well she has succeeded in her object I have already told you."

"Nobly done, indeed," said Sir Henry, warmly; "and how, may I ask?"

"By becoming, in turn, a blessing to another circle, who regard her as a sister; she entered, eleven years ago, the family of Mr. and Mrs. Harcourt, and, having completed the education of their three eldest daughters, and nearly that of the two youngest, they now reluctantly yield their treasure into my hands, to bring sunshine into my home as she has to theirs," replied Major Leslie, "and her noble self-sacrifice and labours will, I am sure, raise and not lower her in your eyes."

"Yes, indeed, she will be welcome for her own sake as well as for yours, Edward, my boy," said the old man; "and," continued he, "it reminds me of Tennyson's lines in *Lady Clara Vere de Vere*—

'Howe'er it be, it seems to me,
'Tis only noble to be good;
Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood.'

And has the rich Lady Castleton, then, tendered no help these many long years? for surely the boy was her half-brother, if whole brother to Miss Howard."

"Herbert Howard stands in exactly the same degree of relationship to the one as the other," replied Edward Leslie; "his mother was Lady Castleton's also; but the daughter, who could desert and leave her dying parent, as she did, to another's care (for it was my Edith who nursed Mrs. Howard and soothed her dying hours, regardless of danger to herself), could also satisfy her conscience—if, indeed, she possesses one—by the Christmas gift of a £5 note to her orphan brother, sent by post; and this has been discontinued since he has passed the years of boyhood."

"Your bride can have no fortune to bring to you, but I will settle the £10,000 upon her which, on a former occasion, I proposed to do, and, with your full pay as major, or half-pay as lieutenant-colonel—for, if you attain that rank, we cannot let you put the seas again between us—you will have a sufficient income for moderate people like yourselves," replied Sir Henry, "and till you fix on a residence, which you need be in no hurry about, remember, this is your home. I

can answer for Adeline's reception of your wife, let her be ten times less good than we believe her to be."

"Yes, indeed," said Adeline, who had lately entered the room in which they were sitting, "your wife, Edward, must be a sister, as you have ever been a brother, to me."

Edith met with a most cordial reception from Major Leslie's relations, and spent a happy week in town. Those bugbears of lovers, settlements, in this instance could afford no opportunity for anxiety to the principals, cause for dispute between guardians, or harvest for the lawyers, who - so constantly raise difficulties and engender strife to lengthen out their always sufficiently long bills. With Edward Leslie's full consent, Edith made over her little hoard to be invested for Herbert, which now yielded between £30 and £40 per annum, owing to the profitable way in which it had been managed by Mr. Walton. This, with a curacy, would place him beyond want, and thus ease his sister of any anxiety regarding his personal comfort.

Sir Henry being too feeble to attend the ceremony, even were it performed in London, there remained no obstacle to the wish expressed by

the Harcourts that Edith should be married from her late home; and knowing her young friend's horror of display, and desire that everything should be quietly and privately arranged, Mrs. Harcourt, in her invitation, made but two exceptions beyond her own family circle—the one being Mr. Walton, who, having undertaken the sad offices for Edith's parents, begged to have the pleasure of ministering on this joyful occasion. The other exception to the general rule was an individual who had, indeed, invited himself—the eccentric old Dr. Willis, whose esteem and admiration Edith had won by her courage and presence of mind some years before, when she saved little Arthur Harcourt from the mad dog.

“A lucky dog, that Major Leslie, to have caught such a head of game—hope he knows it,” said the old doctor, on the morning of the wedding-day, to Mr. Harcourt.

“He quite agrees with you, I assure you,” replied Edward, who at this moment emerged from a shrubbery at the side of the terrace, and appeared by his side.

The little churchyard was thronged with the humble inhabitants of Langley, for, during the

last few years, Edith had received no check or hindrance in her kind offices amongst the poor from Mrs. Harcourt, and was much beloved by them. It was a fête day in the village. The squire's labourers had all a holiday, and the school-children had received new frocks and bonnets from his daughters, and many were the anxious hopes the previous night, before going to rest, that it might be a fine day, and that the sun might shine on the good Miss Howard's wedding, for, according to the old saying, in which the poor put much faith, "Happy is the bride that the sun shines on." Many were the nosegays gathered and tied up in the cottage gardens that evening, for fear it might rain and spoil the flowers before morning ; indeed, as Dr. Willis expressed it, Edith had posies enough showered on her to have made a May-day "lass of the green" of her, had she so desired.

The morning was gray, and about eight o'clock a shower fell, to Flora's dismay, who, with her younger sister, had risen with the lark, and fancied themselves very busy ; they were to be the bridesmaids, and felt themselves important personages for the day.

"I declare, it has begun to rain !" exclaimed

Flora; "of all the days in the year, why must the clouds open their windows to-day?"

"I do not think it will be a really wet day," replied Amy, "it was such a lovely evening; the sun set so gloriously amongst a bank of golden clouds last night, that I cannot fear disappointment to-day; besides, Flora, you know that old Richard is very weatherwise, and when I met him in the greenhouse, just now, and lamented the drops of rain that came pattering on the glass, he assured me it was only 'the pride of the morning.'"

There were many other young faces turned wistfully to the clouds, fearing, yet hoping, what they wished that morning; but the old gardener's prophecy proved true, and soon the sunbeams danced merrily on the wet and glittering leaves and flowers, which had thus gained new beauty from the soft and refreshing shower. Thus, the morning of Edith's young life had been overshadowed with storms, some heavy and dark, and yielding tears of sorrow, but the faith which had never doubted the existence of the sun behind the cloud, was now rewarded by its open brightness, its rays dispersing the mists of care and trouble, which had for a long while hung around her.

Weddings are but rarely the joyous events which the young and inexperienced picture them to be. Many a bright smile hides a full heart, sometimes, alas ! a very heavy and sad one. In cases of happy marriages, the bridal day, at least to the young girl leaving the sacred shelter of her home, cannot be one of unmixed pleasure.

“She goes unto love yet untried and new :
She parts from love which has still been true ;”

and the parents, though perhaps others may still be left to grace their dwelling, will miss one step and one voice they have loved to hear ; and can the mother's heart be light when the nestling, so long and jealously guarded by her watchful love, takes its first long flight, to bear in like turn the anxieties which must ever be mingled with the joys of the wedded lot ? The bridesmaids are often the only ones who thoroughly enjoy the day's festivities, and this when they are not linked in the close relationship of sisterhood with the bride. For amongst sisters who have played together, wept and laughed together, over the griefs and joys of childhood, and whose every hope and fear have

been shared as they older grew, this day cannot be bright as it appears. They will miss her from their walks and in their daily pursuits, her vacant seat will long feel strange, and when they meet again, she can never be the same to them that she has been before; she has now a new world of her own, in which her sorrow or happiness will be centred, and where her energies and thoughtful kindnesses, which before contributed to the sunshine of her early home, must now be mainly bestowed.

Edith had friends who would feel her loss, but yet not sisters, and there was now for her no parting with beloved parents—she had long since yielded those dear ones into the keeping of their common Father in heaven—but the very feeling of orphanhood at such a time, cast a shadow, if not of sadness, yet of increased solemnity, over her. She longed to believe that they could be gazers from afar, on the scene in which she was to take such an important part that day; and it was inexpressibly soothing to her to remember that her father had known, and so highly esteemed him, to whom she was about to unite herself for life; still more so would it have been could she have known that he had desired this very consummation.

The words of Mrs. Howard, that had been attributed by Edith to the incoherency of illness, but the reiteration of which had sometimes inclined her to fancy there might have been a foundation for them, had been lately explained by Edward Leslie. Mrs. Howard accused herself of deeply wronging her step-daughter, it will be remembered, during the last hours of her life. She had known of Edward Leslie's strong admiration for, and attraction to Edith, when first he met her, and though she never would have framed the lie which Eleanor told, to place an impenetrable barrier between them, yet, in very weakness for her own daughter's sake, she partook of its guilt, by giving it her tacit consent, instead of unveiling the deception as soon as she had made its discovery. And the dying woman felt that but for this, Edith might, and probably would have been, then the promised wife of one with whom her happiness would have been secure.

This Edith heard on the eve of her bridal day, and wished she could again have assured her step-mother of her forgiveness, in the words of Joseph to his brethren : " Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, for

now it was not you that sent me hither, but God."

She had been sent to preserve life, to sow the seeds of eternal truth and life, which, having also carefully watered, God had seen fit to give the increase unto; and thus had she carried true riches to the dwellers at Langley Park, once so poor and suffering, from the greatest of all wants—a knowledge of holiness, and experience of the peace of God—these inestimable blessings had she been made the instrument of bringing to the Harcourt family, and they felt that she had been sent to them in their utmost need. But that which lent still deeper interest to this important day, was the presence of her beloved brother, and the part he took in the solemn ceremony; it was Herbert who then stood by the side of his sister, it was he who gave her to the husband of her choice, and it was he, who, when the hallowed rite was over, first offered, out of the fulness of a heart overflowing with the deepest and most loving gratitude, those affectionate and fervent wishes for the happiness of her, who had been at once mother and sister to him in his orphanhood.

After the marriage ceremony, Edward Leslie

and his wife, with the few friends who accompanied them, received the holy communion from Mr. Walton, thus beginning their wedded life by seeking that manna from heaven, which can strengthen and refresh the soul, and keep it near to God. In sorrow Edith had felt its power to soothe the burdened spirit, and now, in joy, could tell of its might to elevate and sanctify the heart. She could testify, by experience, that—

“Earth hath no scene of sadness,
This hope could fail to cheer,
Nor one bright hour of gladness
It would not make more dear.”

CHAPTER IV.

"Give true hearts but earth and sky,
And some flowers to bloom and die;
Homely scenes and simple views,
Lowly thoughts may best infuse."

KEBLE.

MR. AND MRS. HORACE VERNON offered their pretty country house to the newly-married pair for a few weeks, which they were going to spend at Langley Park. The proposal was accepted with thanks, Major Leslie's invalided state rendering it impracticable to make any tour. For many reasons it was a most desirable arrangement, and being situate within three or four miles of the Northwold estates, the opportunity would be afforded to Edward to visit and inspect the state of his uncle's property.

The fine old manor house—Northwold Hall—with the surrounding pleasure-grounds and

spacious Park, had been let for very many years, indeed, ever since Sir Henry had settled in London, which he had done some time previous to his daughter's marriage. The tenants, much to his nephew's regret, were wealthy Roman Catholics. The clergyman of the parish, when Edward last visited Northwold, some years previously, was an old man of the old school, fortunately now nearly extinct, who considered his responsibilities amply discharged, when he had performed the two Sunday services, or paid some one for doing so.

Dissent and Romanism divided the parish. The church, though a small one, was almost empty, saving thin scatterings of the Sunday school children, who attended for the sake of an annual treat and a gift of new bonnets for the girls, and caps for the boys, dispensed on Christmas-day. The churchwardens, clerk, sexton, and the old woman who swept out the church, with the rectory household, and a sleepy old farmer or two, composed the usual Sunday congregation from one year's end to another. Meanwhile, a chapel was built hard by the school, and was always filled to overflowing; wonderful scenes of excitement went on there;

female preachers held forth, and not unfrequently showed their powers by sending other weak, silly women into fits, which were deemed to be decided and astonishing demonstrations of the Spirit being poured out amongst them. Tea-meetings and periodical revivals were held to prevent the system from flagging, and on these occasions things were said and done, for which the terms of irreverence and undue familiarity with sacred subjects are not sufficiently strong. And all this arose from the unfaithfulness of the appointed pastor; had he guarded and tended his flock as a true shepherd, wolves and hirelings would not have broken down the fences of the fold and dispersed the sheep.

Such had been the melancholy state of the parish of Northwold when Major Leslie had last visited it, on his uncle's account, some years ago, and he was anxious to take advantage of this opportunity to inform himself of its present condition.

The first Sunday afternoon after their arrival in the neighbourhood, Edith and her husband drove to Northwold Church, and found it much better filled, though the seats for the poor were still half empty. A change had taken place at

the Rectory, the old man was sleeping in the churchyard amongst his parishioners, for so many of whose souls he must give account. Would he do it with joy? alas! we fear not. A middle-aged man read the Service quickly, not prayed it; the object appeared to be, above all, to save time, for, during some christenings which took place after the second lesson, not only was the beautiful baptismal service too hastily performed, and thus rendered unprofitable to many of the congregation, but also the children, instead of being retained in the minister's arms as emblematical of the words with which they are received into Christ's Church, were, after being baptised in the name of the Three Holy Persons in the Trinity, given back immediately to the parents or godmothers, only the last christened infant remaining in the minister's arms whilst he repeated that part of the service once, for all concerned in it. Having given the charge to the sponsors to bring the little ones to Confirmation, whilst these last words of the Church exhortation were hardly out of his mouth, the clergyman made his way out of the circle assembled round the font, and rapidly walked back to the reading-desk.

Till he ascended the pulpit, Major and Mrs. Leslie had only once caught a momentary glance of his features during his expeditious journey to and from the font, but now they recognised an acquaintance of former years in Mr. Courtenay, whose wit and popularity in society have before been mentioned. When he and Mrs. Courtenay dined at Harrington Court, he was then officiating in that neighbourhood. Having grown tired of it, as it subsequently appeared, he sold his advowson, and was presented to the living of Northwold by a nobleman who resided in the vicinity, and who had found him a pleasant companion and useful personage to entertain his guests.

When Mr. Courtenay preached, he thought it worth while to give time and thought to his delivery, and, apparently, had saved his energies for that end. Eloquence and genius were his idols, and many came from a distance to be, by turns, charmed by the music of his oratory, or electrified by the thunders of his eloquence. Often much was sound and excellent in his sermons, but the language in which his lessons were clothed, though fascinating and delightful to the highly-cultivated mind, fell like words of

an unknown tongue upon the ears of the unlearned and poor, of which class the population of Northwold was mainly composed. Some few thought it very grand and beautiful because they could not understand it, and which such as they did not presume to do, but the others went away to chapel, to hear every word of vain doctrine, because plain and intelligible ideas in simple words were there spoken to them.

Cottage visiting was not in Mr. Courtenay's way, and he rarely attempted it, unless sent for in a case of extremity, which seldom occurred, for, in illness, a stranger is rarely a welcome visitor in the sick room. Dissenters he considered off his hands, and, as these formed the bulk of his parishioners, his parish responsibilities were but small in his own eyes. He appeared to ignore the fact that they were of the number of his flock of which he had taken charge, and that their having strayed into the highways and hedges, was but a motive for greater exertion, that he might find and restore them to the fold to which they rightly belonged.

Mrs. Courtenay's health prevented her from visiting the poor, had she felt so inclined, but she received many of them at the Rectory;

heard their complaints, and relieved them; but, by this means, the greatest beggars and those least deserving benefited most; she was often much deceived, and whilst believing herself to be accurately acquainted with the people, their characters and necessities, and, indeed, priding herself on that knowledge, she was very ignorant of the real state of her husband's parish, and its inhabitants.

These things Major and Mrs. Leslie only found out in part during their stay at Mr. and Mrs. Vernon's country house. Sufficient, however, did they then learn to make them desirous of lending some aid to the unfortunate village of Northwold, in which Edward Leslie felt much interest, having spent there all his boyish years, of which he had many happy recollections. They desired to have a home in the country, if they could find one suitable to their means, and in a healthy and pleasant neighbourhood. That it was quite as possible to find happiness in towns as in villages they were both well aware, for real enjoyment must spring chiefly from the state of a person's mind which, if under the control of high principles and proper motives, can find duties everywhere, and in their fulfilment

happiness, or, at least, content. Yet, it being apparently placed in their own hands to choose where their future lot should be cast, they resolved to make diligent inquiry for a residence far from the din and smoke of cities, where they hoped to be enabled to follow those pursuits most consonant to their tastes.

Sir Henry had expressed a hope that his nephew and niece would come and live near him in London. Had he still remained the desolate old man that he had formerly been, Edward Leslie would, on no account, have disregarded his wish, but, on the contrary, would have deemed it his positive duty to comply with it. The matter stood on other grounds now, and he felt that his uncle's comfort was secured by the residence of his daughter, her husband and family, under his roof, and he, therefore, was anxious to settle down, if possible, near the home of his boyhood. The vicinity of Mrs. Vernon, Edith's friend and former pupil, was also an additional reason and inducement for their residing in or near Northwold.

CHAPTER V.

"Around my ivy'd porch shall spring
Each fragrant flower that drinks the dew."

ROGERS.

THE opportunity they sought was soon presented to them in the shape of a cottage residence, advertised in the local paper for sale in the village of Northwold.

"What do you think about it, Edith?" asked her husband, as he handed the advertisement to her across the breakfast table.

"That we are most fortunate people to wish for an object and have it so soon after placed apparently within our reach," replied his wife; "and, woman-like, I should desire to lose no time in inquiring about Glen Cottage, for fear it may offer attractions to others besides ourselves."

"Very well, you shall have your way, especially as it suits my will also," answered Major

Leslie, and ringing the bell, the carriage was ordered round in half an hour to drive to Northwold. As they approached the village, Major Leslie said—

“I hope you are not building a very romantic villa in the air, as, if so, I fear you will be disappointed. If I am right in my supposition, the house is very much flattered in the advertisement.”

“If so,” rejoined Edith, “it will furnish us with more scope for our ingenuity and opportunity to display our taste in embellishing, as long as it is not too thoroughly ugly,” added she, merrily.

Speculation and uncertainty were soon put an end to by the carriage being drawn up in front of the entrance to Glen Cottage. A large barred gate, painted white, standing between two red brick piers, on each of which “Glen Cottage” was inscribed in large characters, was the first introduction to their proposed home.

Edith laughed, and said—“This is very promising, certainly; but the gate can easily be painted invisible green, and, by being boarded, render our grounds more private. “Glen Cottage” may also be obliterated, and the glaring brick piers clothed in stone-coloured stucco.”

"You are in the possession of the happy faculty of making the best of everything, and always seeing a bright side to every picture in life, dearest Edie," rejoined her husband, affectionately: "and thus, in my wife, I carry a constant sunshine with me wherever I go."

An old woman from a neighbouring dwelling, at the sound of the cracked bell, arrived to unfasten the padlock with which the gate was secured. During this rather slow process—for the old dame tried every key first but the right one of the bunch which gave admittance to the various apartments of the small house—Major Leslie inquired if there had been many visitors to view it.

"Yes, plenty, and too many, your honour, and I hope you'll be pleased to take it, for I have had no peace since it has been put up for sale, and it's hard work running up and down stairs, and backwards and forwards all day long, for a body like me," replied the old woman.

"It becomes a case of charity, Edward," said Edith, with an arch smile. "I feel a decided presentiment that this is to be our fate."

A broad pathway, or narrow carriage road, led up to a square built red brick house, like

such as are invariably represented in children's toys ; a door in the centre, with a window on each side, and three more on the next floor, also three attics peeping out from the tile roof under the chimney. The space between the house and the road, about one-fourth of an acre, was so arranged as to give a view of all that passed that way, leaving the inmates of Glen Cottage in equal publicity. The useful, without the ornamental, had evidently held the first place in the late tenant's estimation, the ground in front being employed as a kitchen garden, as well as a small plot behind the house. A few trees that divided the back garden from a small meadow belonging to the property had been ruthlessly cut down because they overshadowed the ground, and only their stumps remained to show what they had been.

"The barbarous creatures, to deprive us of those trees," exclaimed Edith ; "but I am glad they have left their headless trunks ; they will be of use for rustic ornaments to twine creepers round on the lawn."

"Which is already planned and laid out in your imagination," rejoined her husband, "but will yet be some time before it looks green and takes

the place of that potato ground ; however, with you for a helpmate, Edie, I despair of nothing. We must have the whole of the ground dug up without delay."

"It is just the right time of year for planting. A great deal may be done before winter sets in," continued she ; "I should much like to have trellis-work all over the front of the house to hide those staring bricks ; and with climbing roses and jessamine, I can fancy it becoming a pretty cottage by this time next year."

"That must certainly be by a decided metamorphose," replied Major Leslie ; "but I agree with you in thinking the place capable of great improvement ; a rustic verandah would alter it considerably ; and I hope, after our London visit is over, to be a much more active and useful member of society, I am also very fond of this sort of work, and, I flatter myself, no bad hand at it."

"Oh, the necessity for improvement will furnish us with much amusement and interesting occupation. I begin to feel quite pleased that we have not found 'a lovely cottage villa,' as the advertisement styles it, all ready cut and dried for us," rejoined Edith, "and when you are

suited, as Mr. Brown says, with a foot and ankle as good as new, I shall expect to see wonders performed in rustic carpentering, to prove you are as good a workman as you boast."

The house having been duly inspected and found to contain two sitting-rooms and five bed-rooms, Major Leslie informed the old woman that she need answer no further inquiries, and that her running upstairs and down was now at an end; this, with a *douceur* for her present trouble, considerably changed the expression of her countenance, which had grown miserable and cross during Major and Mrs. Leslie's rather prolonged survey of the premises, and elicited thanks and a civil offer to be of any use to them when they arrived to take up their residence. She was duly installed as guardian till then, of house, garden, meadow, potato-ground, &c.; and when, as they took their leave, she learnt the name of the new purchaser of Glen Cottage, the old dame's delight was unbounded, and the tears ran down her cheeks with joy.

"Why, who would have thought it, that such a grand handsome gentleman like yourself should

be the little Master Edward who used to play cricket with my poor boy, and who was so good as to say my plain oven cakes were better than any he ate at the Hall. Ah! I was away nursing my daughter, please your honour, when you were last here, now seven years ago"—and the dame's tongue, once set going on the subject of old times, rattled on till the carriage drove off. Every one in the village knew before night that the nephew of old Sir Henry, just come from the wars, was about to become a resident in Northwold amongst his old neighbours—at least if any went to bed uninformed of this fact, it was not Dame Bromley's fault.

The time now approached for Mr. and Mrs. Vernon's return to their pleasant home, and after a few days spent by the friends together, Major and Mrs. Leslie, having drawn out plans for their proposed shrubberies, lawn, and walks, left them, at Janet's request, to be commenced under the superintendence of herself and her husband, whose own plantations were about to be thinned out, and would furnish many young trees and shrubs to be transplanted to Glen Cottage. Before taking their departure for London, Major Leslie made inquiries in North-

would for several respectable labourers and workmen to undertake the proposed alterations, being anxious to employ the inhabitants of the parish in which he hoped to dwell. This intention he communicated to Mr. Courtenay, requesting him to recommend the most deserving of them to his notice, but met with a discouraging reply.

“ You had better employ good workmen from the town, Major Leslie. I know of none to recommend to you amongst the villagers. There are bricklayers and masons, but they are all Dissenters, and lazy fellows. I have never trusted any of my work to them,” said Mr. Courtenay ; “ and as for the labourers, they are all slow, and never show their betters any respect or civility.”

“ I am very sorry to hear such an account of my old neighbours,” replied Major Leslie ; “ but if you will tell me which amongst them bear tolerably good moral characters, I shall give them a trial, indeed I feel bound to employ the parishioners, even though it may not seem to be my present interest to do so, for I cannot but fear their degeneracy is partly attributable to my family as non-residents on their property.”

Finding that Mr. Courtenay either did not,

or would not, know anything of the respective merits of his people, Major Leslie applied to the farmers, who were principally his uncle's tenants, and soon, with their aid, selected the few labourers and workmen required for the improvements at Glen Cottage.

On their arrival in town, Sir Henry, though rather disappointed to lose his nephew from his immediate vicinity, was pleased to hear that he meant to reside amongst the family property, adding—

“I see with different eyes than I did formerly, Edward, and I now know I have sadly neglected my stewardship. I am drawing near my end, and cannot redeem the lost time, but I am glad that you, my boy, are going to make some amends to my people, that they may learn to love the name of Leslie again, and find the new race a blessing, and not a curse to them, as I have been.”

The old man sighed deeply, and leaning back in his chair, closed his eyes for a few moments, as if absorbed in meditation on his past neglect, then continued—“You must give me the satisfaction of purchasing, and paying all expenses

connected with your improvements of Glen Cottage, Edward. I shall feel it to be a trifling act of reparation to Northwold, to place you amongst them, and when there, remember, you must make me your banker for all outlays for the benefit of your poor neighbours."

Major Leslie thanked his uncle for his kindness both to him and his wife, who would be, with himself, much pleased to become his almoner. "Indeed," added he, "she understands these things far better than I do, and is much beloved at Langley by the cottagers, and will be delighted to have a field for her gentle labours of love at Northwold."

Christmas was passed in town, and surrounded by his children and grandchildren, his nephew and Edith, who quickly became a favourite with Sir Henry, the old man enjoyed this happy and holy season in a greater degree than he had ever done since the days of his boyhood, and before the spring came, when Edward and his wife were to move into their new home, the summit of his uncle's ambition was reached, when his nephew's name appeared in the "Gazette" as brevet lieutenant-colonel, the honour being con-

ferred for his gallantry during the war, and especially on the occasion on which he lost his foot.

It was now decided, that at the end of his year's leave, he should retire on half-pay, by which period, he had good reason to believe, he should in due course have attained the substantial rank also. He had spent twenty years in the army, and during that time he had not been useless, but, on the contrary, had exercised much and important influence for good, both over the privates in his regiment, and many of his younger brother officers. Now he thought that duty and pleasure alike demanded his presence in England, instead of India, whither his regiment was soon to proceed, from the Cape, so he resolved to beat his sword into a ploughshare, and turn his interest and attention to agriculture, leaving war to those who had no other call for their time and energies.

Colonel Leslie and his wife took possession of their first married home when the trees were putting forth their leaves, some few spring blossoms showing their heads above the ground, and the newly-turfed lawn looking bright with many daisies, which shocked the gardener, the

son of a small tenant of Sir Henry's, but Edith loved the daisy, her childhood's flower, too well to participate in his horror, and secretly hoped his efforts to exterminate the wee crimson-tipped thing would not meet with the complete success he desired.

Herbert had promised to spend a month at Glen Cottage before his ordination, which was to take place on the following Trinity Sunday. Here he could enjoy the quiet retirement he wished for; when relieved from all other cares and duties, he might give himself up to earnest meditation and reading, as a preparation for the sacred dedication he was about to make of himself to God, in undertaking the solemn office of pastor in his Church.

The day he was expected at Northwold, Edith decided to remain at home, and prepare everything for his reception, whilst her husband drove off in their little pony-chaise, a present from Sir Henry to Edith, to meet the traveller, whose luggage was to be brought by the village carrier from the railway station. Many last touches were given to the arrangement of the two rooms appropriated to the well-loved brother.

There were only two sitting-rooms, and Her-

bert must have a room where he could be uninterrupted in his studies, so a small bed-room, opening into the one he was to occupy, was despoiled of its sleeping furniture, which was replaced by a book-case, and convenient writing-table; and Edith's delight was great to be able to receive with so much comfort, into a home of her husband's, and therefore her own, the brother for whose benefit and happiness she had toiled during so many years. Her little drawing-room was arranged, and rearranged, to wear its brightest aspect; some flowers, sent that morning from the Vernons' conservatory, she had tastefully placed in a basket, with ferns and moss, on the table; a few she reserved for his room, remembering his love for flowers from a very early period.

Nothing remained to be done, and nearly an hour must elapse ere the wished-for sounds of Donald, and his carriage-wheels, could be heard. Edith resolves not to be at all impatient, and takes up a piece of work she is finishing for her old and valued friend, Mrs. Sinclair, who has promised to pay them a visit in the course of the summer, if spared so long. There is a ring at the garden bell; how tiresome! she does not

feel inclined to entertain visitors ; perhaps it may be some one on business for Edward—she hopes so ; but the door opens, and Mr. Courtenay is announced. He is not a very frequent visitor, but not knowing what to do with himself that afternoon, it has occurred to him that he owes a visit, and the Leslies are both well-informed and agreeable people, though too particular in their views of duty to suit him as intimate acquaintance. Edith certainly did wish him somewhere else, and she might do that without doing very wrong, for anywhere amongst his poor parishioners his duty might have taken him, but as he was there, she remembered the Christian obligation to “be courteous,” and consoled herself with the reflection, that his conversation, if he was in a humour to make himself agreeable, would pass away the time till her husband and brother arrived.

Mr. Courtenay had plenty to say ; Edith was a good listener, and only differed occasionally from him, just sufficiently to give zest and interest to the discussion. He was very fond of music, sang himself, and considered himself a good judge. He had heard Edith’s beautiful voice, when she and her husband dined at the

Rectory, and he half hoped she would sing to him now, as he thought it would be, at least to him, an agreeable manner of passing the afternoon ; but his praises, and broad hints, took no effect. She would have sung to please the poorest cottager, and had done so ere now in a sick room, but had no inclination to pander to the idle amusement of this listless, lazy pastor, whilst his flock were being scattered and devoured through his heedlessness.

CHAPTER VI.

"Ye who your Lord's commission bear,
His way of mercy to prepare ;
Think not of rest, though dreams be sweet,
Start up and ply your heavenward feet."

KEBLE.

THE sound of carriage-wheels caught Edith's ear, and she went to the window to look out, apologising for her eagerness by saying—

"Excuse me, Mr. Courtenay, but I am expecting my brother, whom I have not seen for some months; he is my only one, and, being orphans, we have been all in all to each other for the last twelve or thirteen years."

"Pray do not apologise, Mrs. Leslie," rejoined Mr. Courtenay; "Mr. Howard is fortunate in the possession of such a sister; I never had one to take such interest in my welfare, or I might have been other than I am," and a slight sigh escaped

him; "but," continued he, "I will take my leave now, and will have the pleasure of calling on your brother, if he is going to make any stay with you."

"Thank you, Mr. Courtenay, my brother will, I trust, remain at least a month with us till after his ordination," replied Edith.

The pony chaise entered the garden as the visitor left, the gentlemen merely exchanging bows as they passed each other.

"Now, Edie, I have brought Herbert safely home to you," exclaimed Colonel Leslie, "and, without losing any time on the way, Donald has sped along famously; but confess you have already supposed the train to be late, or that Herbert had missed the right one, have you not?" said her husband, playfully touching her with his whip as he drove off to the yard.

"No, indeed, I had no time to think about it, for Mr. Courtenay has been here for the last hour discussing every subject you can fancy, except his parish."

"How well you are looking, Edith," said her brother, "and I am most pleasantly surprised in your home, after the ridiculous account of its ugliness which you gave me in your letters."

"I am glad you find it so much better than you expected, Herbert. I think its looks are improving, certainly, and it is better clothed ; the roses and creepers on the trellis-work hide much of its natural deformity."

"And this verandah, when covered, will form a shady arbour to sit and read or work in," rejoined he.

"Yes ; we are going to make this vine we have planted shelter us from the sun, if it cannot bear fruit in this climate out of doors ; and even of that I do not despair," continued Edith. "I really am going to plant a passion-flower, which Janet Vernon has given me, on the south end, though Edward shakes his head incredulously, for it is as warm here as at dear old Harrington, and you remember, Herbert, how well it grew there, covering the south wall with hundreds of its beautiful blossoms. But I must show you your rooms," added she, "or you will not be ready for dinner, and the colonel is punctuality itself."

"My rooms, sounds very lordly, Edith," said her brother ; "more like a prince taking up his residence with a suite at a palace, than a poor fellow who will think himself rich as a curate with £80 a-year."

"It may sound as it likes, Mr. Humility," rejoined Edith, "but here they are—your bedroom and your studio—so, when you are tired of our society, or we of yours, you will have a place of refuge."

"Thanks many, dearest sister, for this fresh mark of your affectionate consideration for me; and you must tell Edward how much obliged I feel to him for his kindness in all this towards me."

At the end of the week in which Herbert made his first appearance in the village of Northwold, Mr. Courtenay fulfilled his promise of calling on the young man. After some conversation on general subjects, he introduced that uppermost in his own mind, and which, indeed, formed the object of his visit that morning.

"You are, I understand, preparing for ordination, Mr. Howard; if you have not a title for orders, I should be happy to give you one."

"Thank you," replied Herbert, "but I have been promised one already."

"Still, perhaps your arrangement may not have been finally and irrevocably made," continued Mr. Courtenay, "and it occurred to me, as I am desirous of assistance to enable me to

leave home for a few months, that, having your brother and sister here, it would be a most agreeable plan for you also."

"That certainly would have been a strong temptation, Mr. Courtenay, but, on the whole, perhaps it is better as it is, though I am much obliged to you for thinking of me."

"Well, why not decide to let it be so? I dare say your friend will let you off if you ask him, and you will have no hard work here, there is very little to do, the church being small and easy, and when I come back I will only tax you for one duty, perhaps not always that. You may have your time to yourself, and I can introduce you to Lord Westfield's family, and the Honourable H. Finlay, and plenty of agreeable people; in fact, find you some young ladies with several thousands a-year for you to choose a wife from. Can you refuse such tempting offers?" asked Mr. Courtenay.

"One of the inducements you have held out to my brother," rejoined Edith Leslie, "will not prove such to him, but deter him from accepting your proposal, Mr. Courtenay."

"Pray what can that be?" asked that gentle-

man. "I thought I was sure of having the lady on my side on the present occasion."

"The scarcity of work of which you speak. He has been anxious, in his first curacy, to place himself where there is plenty to do, and a resident rector to train him in the right way. He is willing to be a learner, and in subjection, and prefers a good, efficient, and even a hard master to an easy one."

Edith spoke gently but gravely, and Mr. Courtenay felt that she deemed the tone and manner too light in which he had discussed the subject. Herbert confirmed his sister's words, and added—

"I trust you will have no difficulty in finding help that will permit you to pursue your wish of absenting yourself for a time. I am sorry it is not in my power to accommodate you, having engaged myself for two years to the Rector of Wilmington. Perhaps you are acquainted with that neighbourhood?"

"I have met Mr. Ashby, but cannot claim acquaintance with him," replied Mr. Courtenay; "however, I can tell you that your wish for hard work will be gratified. The population of his living is over seven thousand, and chiefly of

the lower class. It is both a mining and manufacturing district, and I wish you joy of it, Mr. Howard. I prophecy you will be thankful to come to Northwold for change of air and rest, once a year at least ; oftener I do not suppose you will get leave, unless Mr. Ashby is more merciful to his curate than himself."

"This will, doubtless, be a pleasant retreat for a holiday, when I have earned one," rejoined Herbert, "but I am not to be the only curate ; there is another much older than myself."

"Oh, you will then be the unfortunate 'sub,' who, you know, in all professions gets 'put upon' (as the poor people say), from the under secretary to the under kitchen maid," replied Mr. Courtenay, in his usual bantering tone.

Edith felt disquieted ; she remembered Him who was content to take upon Him the form of a servant ; and should the servant be greater than his Lord, and deem it drudgery to toil all day long to win those souls, whom his Heavenly Master gave His life a ransom to save ? She longed to express the righteous indignation which filled her breast at the careless and irreverent way in which her visitor treated sacred and solemn duties, but she abstained from so doing,

though it was grief and pain to her, for, Mr. Courtenay being her minister and her elder, she was not the fit person to reprove his sinful folly. She contented herself with breathing a silent prayer in the words of Keble's Evening Hymn—

“Oh, by Thy own sad burthen borne,
So meekly up the hill of scorn,
Teach thou thy priests their daily cross
To bear as thine nor count it loss.”

Mr. Courtenay soon after took his leave, and when the garden gate had closed on him, Colonel Leslie turned to his young and earnest brother-in-law, and said—

“There, is a sad instance of the evils arising out of the present mode of bestowing church preferment; doubtless it is not always so, but I could wish the system altered, and the power placed more in the hands of our church. How this could best be done remains for wiser heads than mine to decide.”

“How should you like the Scotch Presbyterian and American Church system?” asked Herbert.

“I think,” replied Colonel Leslie, “that there is something pleasing in the congregation choosing their pastor, but I fancy this is also open

to serious objections, for a cabal can virtually oblige their elected minister to resign when they are tired of him or have found some one better suited to their tastes, as illustrated in that little work, 'Shady Side of a Pastor's Life.' "

"The only remedy, it appears to me—but I have not given the subject deep consideration—is to have a real Convocation of the different orders of the Church, which, when lawfully established, might have the powers, as well as the empty forms of self-government, which are all that we can now boast of possessing," rejoined Herbert.

"Yes, that would meet the necessities in a greater measure," replied Colonel Leslie, "and would certainly approach nearer to the customs of the Primitive Christians; but there are many who look back to the tyranny of priestcraft in the days of the Plantagenets and the Tudors, and upon the state of bondage in which the Romish hierarchy has plunged many foreign nations in modern times, and therefore fear to yield too great a power into the hands of any ecclesiastical body."

"When the Bible was a sealed book, there were dangers arising from superstition, generated

and fostered by ignorance, which now, in this our free, fair England, with the Word of Life open to every cottage child, could not again recur; and," continued Herbert, "I cannot apprehend any injurious result were such a course adopted, but wiser heads than ours might surely devise some check and effectual guarantee to allay the fears and jealousy of such of the timid or over-cautious spirits as now oppose the scheme."

The weeks passed rapidly by, but were not wasted or unprofitably spent by any of the inmates of Glen Cottage. The Monday preceding Trinity Sunday had arrived, and Herbert Howard was on his road to the cathedral town of C——, to undergo his examination by the bishop, or rather his chaplains. Having passed through his Oxford career with honour and success, he did not apprehend any serious risk of failure in his present ordeal, yet could not refrain from the wish that his week's labours and perils were fairly over. The excellent and kind-hearted bishop, having himself experienced the discomforts of a slender purse, received all the candidates for ordination at an early dinner, and invited them to spend the evening at the palace.

This saved expense to many who could ill afford it, but Herbert found it expedient to make but a very light repast, having experienced the evil result of close study after a good meal, in a severe headache, which, the first day, wellnigh incapacitated him from replying to the many questions, often put with much want of perspicuity by his examiners.

The last day of suspense drew to a close, and Herbert received the agreeable intelligence that he was accepted, and had passed through his examination to the complete satisfaction of both chaplains. The bishop was also pleased to express to him his special approval of his written sermon, the tone and contents of which confirmed his hope that, in him, an humble-minded and earnest labourer was about to be added to Christ's vineyard, and to his own diocese in particular, where it would give him a sincere pleasure to watch and promote his exertions in their common Master's cause.

CHAPTER VII.

"Spirit of Light and Truth! to Thee
We trust them in that musing hour,
Till they, with open heart and free,
Teach all Thy Word in all its power.

"When foemen watch their tents by night,
And mists hang wide o'er moor and fell,
Spirit of Counsel and of Might
Their pastoral warfare guide Thou well."

KEBLE.

ON Herbert's return to his lodgings that evening he found Colonel and Mrs. Leslie arrived and already informed of the joyful intelligence of his success. Edith longed to be present at the solemn event of the morrow, and finding, as she hoped, that her brother shared her desire, the journey had been decided on by her husband, ever anxious to indulge his gentle wife's wishes.

"I have brought you, Herbert, a letter from our dear old friend Mr. Walton; not knowing

how to direct to you here, and wishing you to receive it before your ordination, he enclosed it to me, well divining that I should not be very far removed from you on this occasion, unless prevented by illness," said his sister.

"Thank you and him, dear Edith. I shall put it by to read when I retire to my room for the night," answered Herbert.

"I hope that does not imply that you are going to sit up instead of going to bed to-night," rejoined Colonel Leslie, "for you are not looking as well, Herbert, as when we parted at Northwold on Monday last, and, I am sure, require rest. To-morrow cannot be otherwise than an exciting day to us all—to you, especially, an exhausting and fatiguing one, with your fervent and highly-wrought feelings."

"A day of high privilege and great blessing, I trust," replied the young man, "and for which it seems impossible to make too great preparation. The preparation of the heart is from the Lord, I know, but surely it cannot be sought too earnestly and carefully. If our Divine Master, in whom all wisdom and fulness dwelt, saw fit to spend the night in prayer to God ere he chose from amongst his followers the Apostles

who were first to carry the tidings of salvation to a fallen world, how much more does it behove weak, sinful mortals to seek for grace and strength ere they take the awful responsibility of never dying souls upon themselves. In Ezekiel, how solemn is the charge given to pastors: 'If thou speakest not to warn the wicked from his wicked way to save his life, the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand;' and, again: 'When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness and commit iniquity, because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, but his blood will I require at thine hand.' There are moments when I feel," continued Herbert, "as if I could never dare to enrol myself amongst the stewards of the mysteries of God."

"You must at such times of fear forget yourself, and look unto Him who is wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption," rejoined Edith, calmly and soothingly.

"Yes, indeed," replied her brother, "there is my only refuge, and in His word I find comfort. 'My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness:' may it be so with

me and all my brethren to-morrow ; and now, good night ; it is getting late. I need not ask your prayers, I know I have them." And thus they parted till the next day.

When Herbert retired to his room, he opened Mr. Walton's letter, which contained much that was in unison with his present frame of mind.

"MY DEAR HERBERT," wrote that kind friend, "often as we have before discussed the deeply interesting and solemn subject of your ordination, the many weighty responsibilities of one who becomes an appointed labourer in the Maker's vineyard, and the various duties of a Christian pastor, I cannot refrain, on the eve of the voluntary and solemn dedication of yourself to the ministry, from penning a few lines of counsel, remembering that 'speech is fleeting,' says the poet, 'but writing is eternal.' I have had nearly forty years' experience, and that emboldens me, notwithstanding my many shortcomings, to urge on you several points, by many, perhaps, deemed trifling ; but believe me, my dear Herbert, they are not such, if you measure their importance by the degree of in-

fluence they may, nay, must have, on your usefulness, in your sacred office.

“Trinity Sunday, of all seasons, I like the best, for ordination ; everything in the service of the day constantly reminds you of the nothingness of the creature, and of the majesty of the Creator, and the more than vanity of attempting any work, but especially that of the ministry, without the gracious help of the Three Divine Persons. How weak and powerless, exposed to the many dangers and trials of our office, must we feel, but for the protecting and ever-watchful care of an Almighty Father ! how overwhelming the awful charge that we take upon ourselves, to account for the souls of the flock over whom we are set ! Surely, this must crush us to the dust, but for the thought of that ‘Saviour and Redeemer,’ who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and who hath said : ‘Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world ;’ and who will present his faithful, though often erring servants, faultless before the throne, purified from all stain, in His most precious blood. Again, when we in fear and trembling ask ourselves, ‘Who is sufficient for these

things?' The Holy Spirit, 'the Comforter who helpeth our infirmities,' descendeth into the heart, giving peace and strength for the work before us.

"Now, for my words of advice, which you will receive, I know, in the same spirit of love in which they are given. I think you are blessed with good judgment, as far as I can tell at your present age, but often the usefulness of Christian ministers is marred by a want of discretion and wisdom; with the best intentions they say and do what is calculated to injure instead of profit, perhaps by choosing the wrong moment or place to speak; sometimes this defect arises from too great confidence in their own wisdom, or from a naturally bad judgment, but in both cases there is a remedy within the reach of all: 'If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.' The need of this we must bear in mind daily and hourly, and asking in faith, nothing doubting, shall receive the fulfilment of the promise.

"Again, do not despise or neglect method in your parochial work—'Let all things be done in order;' that is too frequently but little thought

of. Those, however, who have known the sadness of failure in their endeavours, without any apparent cause, unless it be the want of due regularity and design, will counsel you not to waste your strength and energy in a desultory prosecution of your parish work. According to its size, divide it into districts, to be visited periodically, as often as you can—the sick, of course, must receive special and constant attendance. Do not aim at more than you have strength and opportunity for, but what you attempt do well; decide, after due consideration given to the subject, how much you can undertake, and then let nothing but absolute necessity or illness prevent your accomplishing it.

“When you rise in the morning, to the light and duties of a new day, unless you have some rule of action, and know what you have to do, and when it is to be done, you will unavoidably waste large intervals of valuable time in arranging, and also run great risk of ill-balancing your various duties, giving undue space to that work you like best, and either leaving undone altogether, or doing ill, that which is less congenial to you. Let there be no putting off till the morrow the duty to be done, whether it be

a disagreeable visit to pay, or a painful but necessary rebuke to administer, grapple with the difficulty at once, it will only grow each day more distasteful and more burdensome; and, remember, prayer is the life of all work—without it, ‘work would be as useless as the suit of armour without the living man within it.’ Without prayer, the minister is as weak as those he should strengthen, and but a blind leader of the blind. Agonising may be our fears for those who appear to be hurrying on the road to destruction, our words may fall unheeded, or be laughed to scorn, our presence avoided, but we can wield a mighty power—we can pray. We can call down upon them the mighty Spirit—the resistless Pleader; we can bring the Saviour to them, though they will not go themselves to His throne.

“My pen and thoughts have run on till you will accuse me of addressing a sermon rather than a letter to you, my dear Herbert; but I have felt anxious to give you the benefit of my gray hairs, and, having attained the age of man, I know not how soon my lips may be closed for ever in this world from speaking the words of counsel and of warning; and this will plead my

excuse if I have wearied you. That you may so run your course, as at the end of your earthly race to hear the blessed salutation addressed to you : ' Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of your Lord,' is the prayer of

“ Your sincere friend,

“ H. WALTON.”

Herbert perused these pages with serious and deep attention, and resolved, if his life were spared, to at least read them once in every year, when the present season returned. The morning of the Sabbath was far advanced before the young man retired to rest, but he felt assured that in the strength of the enriching hours of prayer spent in communion with his God, he should the better be enabled to go through the fatigues of the day now dawning upon him.

When he met his brother and sister at breakfast, the expression of his countenance was so calm and peacefully happy, and his eye beamed with such a serious joy, that they could not but perceive, that if his body had taken but little repose, his spirit had been refreshed greatly.

The anxious fears had passed away, for "perfect love casteth out fear," and the young soldier was now prepared to buckle on the full armour of God, no longer doubting, but in full assurance of hope, believing that in the ranks of the Great Captain of his salvation, he would be more than conqueror, through Him who loved us, and gave himself for us.

Edith's heart was full with joy and thankfulness, as she saw the loved young brother of her vow arrayed in the snow-white robes of the holy office he was about to assume ; as she fastened round his neck the delicate cambric bands the work of her own fingers, and gazed on the mild, sweet face, and fair open brow, surely, she thought, such must Samuel have been when called to the priesthood. At that moment, was not all toil, anxiety, and grief overpaid by the present bliss ? She had trusted, and was not confounded. To her had, indeed, been given—

" A glorious morrow,
To that her night of pain,
Making her dews of sorrow
Like shining after rain."

Oh, that his mother could see and know the

present pure happiness of the son she had committed to her care, and learn that, through dependence on heavenly grace, the sister had fulfilled her solemn promise, uttered in the chamber of death, thirteen years ago, to train him up in the fear of God and love of his Saviour, and to "make his happiness in this world, and the next, her first and chief object in life."

A silent pressure of the hand from Colonel Leslie, and a fond, long kiss from Edith, and the young pastor elect is gone to join the white-robed band in the cathedral. They follow after, and procure seats, where he is ever in view, during the whole beautiful service.

" 'Tis silence in thy temple, Lord."

All heads are bowed in prayer, in the eye of faith a rich cloud of incense fills the air, charged with the breath of supplication to the great Shepherd and Bishop of all souls, that he may pour out the fulness of his blessing on the young champions now enlisting under the banner of his cross. The pause is over, and the almost heavenly

strain bursts from the choir, emulating the angelic songs—

“Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,
Rise floating on its dove-like way.”

If the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much, we may, must hope, if not all, many were that day filled with the Holy Ghost, as on the day of Pentecost. No longer are the miraculous gifts, as then, bestowed, but the spirit of light and truth, the spirit of counsel and of might, and of God's most holy fear, still are ready to be poured out, in rich abundance, in answer to the prayer of faith. They kneel sheep of the fold, they rise shepherds of flocks, armed with the pastoral staff; into green pastures, and by streams of living waters, must they lead them, for He who hath committed them to their keeping, will, at their hands, require an account of every missing lamb, at the great day of reckoning, and if any be then found to have perished for lack of food, or from exposure to the heat of temptation, or the wintry storms of sin, because the shepherd led them not to the fountain of life, and neglected

to show unto them the "covert" from the tempest, and the "shadow of a great rock in a weary place," woe unto that unfaithful pastor ; "behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the Lord."

CHAPTER VIII.

“So, evermore, he deems his name
Best honoured, and his way prepared,
When watching by his altar flame
He sees his servants duly paired.”

KEBLE.

WE next find Herbert at Wilmington, working diligently, and with all his heart, but in due subjection to his rector, a most worthy and excellent clergyman, who gave a bright example to his curates in the zeal and devotion with which he pursued his sacred duties, and the young pastor was not loth to follow in his shining track. Two years had passed away, and he had again knelt in the old cathedral, to receive the full powers of the Christian priesthood.

While on his rounds one day, in the district

appointed to him by Mr. Ashby, he met two gentlemen, with the elder of whom he had become acquainted during his residence in that neighbourhood. Salutations were exchanged, when Mr. Sholton said—

“Mr. Howard, allow me to introduce you to my friend, Lord Westfield; he is acquainted with your relatives, Colonel and Mrs. Leslie, and resides in their vicinity.”

“Yes; I have had much pleasure in making their acquaintance since I have taken up my residence at Heronden Park,” rejoined that nobleman, “and have heard of Mrs. Leslie’s brother, and promised, Mr. Howard, to take her a faithful account of your looks and health, on my return home.”

“Have you lately left the neighbourhood of Northwold, may I ask, Lord Westfield?” inquired Herbert, “as in that case you can report to me, also, of my brother and sister.”

“I came from there last week, and had the pleasure of seeing both Colonel and Mrs. Leslie the day before I left. They appeared quite well, and are most actively employed in all good works in their parish,” replied Lord Westfield.

"They are very anxious to ameliorate the condition, social and moral, of the people there, I know," was Herbert's rejoinder.

"Do you never take or obtain a holiday, Mr. Howard?" asked his new acquaintance; "for I have been nearly a year resident at Heronden, and have never seen or heard of you at Glen Cottage."

"I have been away once from my duties during the last two years, and am looking forward to spending a few weeks at Northwold very shortly," replied Herbert; "but I have not been there since my ordination, as, unfortunately, the only time Mr. Ashby could spare me, my brother and sister were from home, on a visit at his old uncle's, Sir Henry Leslie, but he was kind enough to invite me to meet them there."

"He was dangerously ill, I heard, as I passed through town," said Lord Westfield. "At his advanced age, his loss would hardly be a subject of regret, I should suppose, and certainly it would be matter of rejoicing, if it installed your brother-in-law in Northwold Hall."

"It may not result in that, as the daughter and her family are quite reconciled to Sir

Henry, yet the estates have always gone with the title for numerous generations, and there is an abundance of wealth unconnected with the landed property ; but," continued Herbert, "it is well these things are not in our own disposal, for we should too often make grievous mistakes, and now we are sure that all will be well and wisely ordered for the best."

"It is a happy state of mind, to be enabled to realise this great truth as the language of the heart, and not of the lips alone, as I believe you truly do," said Mr. Sholton, "and many may well envy you its possession. But I see you are impatient to be gone, Mr. Howard."

"Not quite that," replied Herbert. "I should much like, were the time mine and at my own disposal, to walk part of the way home with you, but I have an appointment at the further end of my district, and fear I shall scarcely keep it."

"You are, I see, a punctual man," observed Lord Westfield.

"My good sister endeavoured, and I hope with success, to imbue me with that useful quality," replied Herbert ; "she taught me to consider time as a gift of which if we are sinful and foolish enough to undervalue and mislay our

own portion, we certainly have no right to appropriate and rob that which belongs to those around us."

"You have something to thank her for in this alone, Mr. Howard," rejoined Lord Westfield.

"Under God, I have her to thank for everything I have or hope for, and for all the happiness I enjoy," warmly responded the young clergyman.

"We will not detain you longer, and thus lead you to break her rule, Mr. Howard," rejoined Mr. Sholton; "but as you will, I am sure, like to hear some Northwold news, cannot you dine with us on Thursday?—we are expecting a few friends on that day."

"Thank you. I am sorry to say I cannot, as it is my turn to be Cottage Lecturer that evening."

"Well, can you come to us to-day?" asked his friend.

"Unfortunately, I assist Mr. Ashby in the Confirmation Class to-night," replied Herbert.

"You clergymen are so full of occupation, that we can never get hold of you," said Mr. Sholton. "But have you any engagement for to-morrow? it will be the only opportunity of

your meeting Lord Westfield, as he leaves us on Friday, I regret to say."

"I shall be very happy to accept your kind invitation, as I have no prior claim;" and wishing the gentlemen good morning, Herbert pursued his way with rapid strides.

As his late companions walked home, he furnished them with a topic of conversation.

"A remark which fell from your lips during our recent interview, implying that you knew the sincerity of Mr. Howard's observation on perfect acquiescence in the decrees of Providence, has excited my curiosity regarding his history; can you indulge it?" asked Lord Westfield.

"Yes, willingly. I have learnt it chiefly from himself—for his sister is a chord which ever rouses him to eloquence. He was born to station and wealth, an only son, and the last scion of a very old family, the Howards of Harrington Court. His father lent his name as director to a bank in Ireland, which then was supposed to be as safe and firm as any in England, but which broke in consequence of some extensive frauds and forgeries committed by a rascal who made his escape to America. The shock pro-

duced a fit of apoplexy, and the boy and his sister were left orphans and penniless, when he was about ten years of age. By her exertions she found means to educate him at a good school, and then sent him to college, where he highly distinguished himself during his Oxford career. And he has told me that, having an early wish to enter the ministry, which his sister fostered and encouraged by every means in her power, he can now look back with thankfulness, and see, in the loss of his family estates, the hand of a merciful and wise Providence clearly marking out the pastor's lot for him, than which he can conceive no happier or more glorious portion, and for which he considers himself far better fitted by inclination and talents than for the position of master of a large landed property. He has been ordained rather more than two years, which have been spent here in this thickly populated parish. He reverences our good Rector, Mr. Ashby, who, on his part, is very partial to his young curate, whom he finds a most earnest and efficient assistant in his labours."

The young nobleman had, during the last twelvemonth, come into his estate and honours

by his father's death, the old lord, who had bestowed the living of Northwold on his agreeable and witty friend, Mr. Courtenay ; this presentation his son much lamented but could not now alter.

On the day following the late conversation, Herbert dined at Mr. Sholton's house, and had much interesting discourse with Lord Westfield, whom he found to be not only a man of cultivated mind and taste, but also an earnest promoter of all schemes conducive to public good, both religious and social.

"Colonel Leslie and myself are kindred spirits," said he ; "and it is most pleasant to devise together plans for the amelioration of one's poor neighbours, but he finds himself sadly shackled by his clergyman's want of energy and interest in such matters."

"It is most unfortunate, certainly," replied Herbert ; "but we must hope he will catch the infection of your own and my brother's ardour, or at least be shamed into exertion."

"I fear we shall not do much with him. He makes himself scarce, and is always running away to London or elsewhere on positive business, or to visit some sick friend or relative, so

that he is seldom at home during the week ; his circle of acquaintances and relations must be a peculiarly sickly and afflicted one, if we are strictly to believe in the necessity of his frequent absences."

"He seems to have made a mistake," rejoined Herbert, "in fixing himself in a retired country neighbourhood ; his talents would turn to far better account in some fashionable chapel in London, or in a large watering-place. There his flights of eloquence and the elegant diction of his sermons would be appropriate, and perhaps, amongst a highly-educated congregation, attract many who would disdain those same truths in an humbler garb."

"Perhaps you are right, Mr. Howard," observed Lord Westfield, "and his unsuitable position may plead some excuse for him. I will not be hard on any of your holy profession, for the sake of the many good and earnest members of it, such as yourself and your fellow-labourers here, but still our misfortune at Northwold remains the same, for Mr. Courtenay is certainly not the right man in the right place."

When the gentlemen returned to the drawing-room, they found the ladies eagerly discussing

some subject which appeared to afford at once interest and surprise.

"May we share in your conversation," asked Mr. Sholton, "or is it peculiarly for the benefit of the fair sex?"

"Oh, no," replied a young lady, who was on a visit there. "I received a letter yesterday, from a friend in Germany, in which she mentions the wondrous skill of a native of that country, a Dr. Pfeiffner, in performing almost miraculous cures in cases of blindness, even where it has existed for a very lengthened period, nay, some assert, where the individual has been born blind, but that I do not credit."

"That is certainly not probable, I had almost said possible," remarked Lord Westfield.

"No, such cases are, I believe, deemed by the cleverest men impracticable," observed Herbert; "yet, in the marginal reading of an old Bible, I have seen it stated that such a cure has been effected; but," continued the young clergyman, addressing himself to the lady who had before spoken, "can you give me any further information respecting this German oculist? you will confer a great favour by so doing."

"I understand that he is expected very shortly

to arrive in England, and is now in Paris performing marvellous cures," replied the young lady ; "but I will write to-morrow to my correspondent and obtain his address for you ; I am going away at the end of this week, but will forward it to you through Mrs. Sholton."

"Thank you, Miss Monck, I am extremely obliged to you for taking this trouble ; it may be the means of restoring sight to one who has patiently borne its loss for many years," rejoined Herbert Howard.

"What a dreadful affliction ! the worst of all I should think," observed one of the company.

"I have been assured by the lady of whom I speak, that she considers the loss of sight a far less deprivation than would have been that of hearing."

"I cannot fancy that," rejoined the person who had last spoken. "I think if I could see the beauties of nature and the faces of those I love best, I could make myself happy with books, work, and painting."

"I doubt not that all may find blessings in their lot sufficient to fill their hearts with the joyous glow of thankfulness, be their portion great or small of this world's delights," continued

Herbert ; “ but my friend being a very exquisite musician, would, if deaf, lose her greatest pleasure, and of all the other pursuits you mention, there is but one in which she cannot indulge—painting, I mean.”

“ But she cannot peruse the many interesting books constantly published,” remarked Miss Monck.

“ For the enjoyment of those she is indebted to her sisters or mother, who read aloud, whilst her busy fingers are engaged in some useful work ; but there are now a great variety of volumes, of all species of literature, printed for the blind. She is an accomplished linguist, I assure you ; and should it please God to remove the darkness which has so long shrouded from her gaze the lovely things of this pleasant world, she will have a wide field of enjoyment opened to her, in many foreign works of great interest and beauty.”

“ You have quite interested us all, Mr. Howard,” said Mrs. Sholton ; “ most earnestly do I hope the result may prove such as you and all her friends must wish, and I trust you will not leave us uninformed of the circumstances.”

“ I will not forget the friendly interest you

have kindly manifested on the subject, and hope it may be in my power to give you the pleasing intelligence that success has crowned Dr. Pfeiffer's efforts," replied Herbert; and looking forward to the agreeable hope of meeting Lord Westfield, when he visited Northwold, the young curate walked to his lodgings full of sanguine anticipations of happiness in store for many.

Visions of much that was delightful passed through his mind, and he found himself building castles in the air to an amusing extent, when the recollection of a sermon and lecture to be prepared, with only one spare evening in that week in which to complete his work, brought back his wandering fancies to the realities and duties of the present.

His sister wrote him reproving letters, warning him against wasting the midnight oil, and he admitted the truth and good sense of her reasoning; but when could or did he ever find a quiet, undisturbed time, in which he could compose his thoughts to write, but of an evening or at night? If ever he became a country rector, in a moderate sized parish, he would then not only acknowledge the wisdom of her rules, but also put them in practice; now it

was impossible. When his rector, Mr. Ashby, and his brother curate, had spent all day in visiting the sick poor, and those weary in spirit, and attended to the various schools, how much more yet appeared wanting to be done; for, by a division of the population of Wilmington into three, each clergyman had over two thousand three hundred immortal souls committed to his charge. Had the day been twice as long as it really was, the time would still be too short to take a glimpse of each family more than once in the course of some months. To attend to the sick and needy alone swallowed up the day, so it remained but to curtail the rest which, if not positively needful, was yet most desirable to obtain. Thus Herbert's moderator lamp burned many hours longer every night in that small sitting-room than Edith, the giver, had ever designed that it should, and the worthy little landlady, who trimmed and supplied it for him, shook her head gravely at the large consumption of Colza oil by the young curate.

CHAPTER IX.

"Love rules the camp, the court, the grove,
And men below, and saints above,
For love is heaven and heaven is love."

SCOTT.

AN old man has passed away—not as once it seemed he would unwept, desolate and amongst menials and strangers; but with the choice blessing of loved ones round his dying bed. All most dear to him were there—his children and their little ones received his blessing, before he was parted from them, and taken to meet the only absent member from that group, the gentle companion of his early manhood, who, after sharing his home for a brief space, had gone to a better land.

Edward and Edith both were by his side, to participate in his last earthly smiles, and rejoiced that, though till long past noon his day of life

had been clouded with the darkness of sin and unrest, mercy and light had shed their rays over the evening of his pilgrimage, and rendered the end not only peaceful but happy—

"His end was the sun at its setting."

No unseemly haste to learn the last testament was felt or shown. Edward Leslie had never been deterred from following the dictates of his conscience by fear of worldly loss, and felt he could, with the many blessings he now possessed, resign himself to his lot, be it wealth or the absence of that weighty responsibility, in thankfulness. If it fell to his portion, he should accept it with gratitude from the Giver of all good things, and pray to be prevented from any abuse of it—for that power and riches bring their duties as well as their privileges he was fully sensible. Adeline, who was so deeply her cousin's debtor, rejoiced in the hope that he would fill the position as head of the family, of which he was so worthy a representative. From a few remarks which had fallen from her father, she had been led to believe that thus it would be, but she possessed no certain knowledge of the fact.

The honoured remains laid in their last resting place, in the humble but lively hope of a blessed resurrection, the latest wishes of their deceased relative were now made known by the confidential solicitor, Mr. Mauley.

"In the words of my old friend," said he, "Edward Leslie, my nephew, having throughout my life shown me the reverence and loving duty of a son, and manifested in times of peculiar trial the truest fraternal affection to my dear daughter, Adeline, I bequeath my property to them, as if they were truly brother and sister : to him the estate of Northwold, and all such lands as have ever accompanied the title, which God grant that he may honour better than I have done. To my daughter I leave all my monies and personal property, saving such as may be found in Northwold Hall."

The main points declared, the farther details of the parchment will be of little interest to relate. The reading of this will was (a rare occurrence) productive of complete satisfaction to all parties therein concerned.

Soon after this event, Sir Edward Leslie observed to his wife one morning, as she and Adeline sat at work—

"When do you think Herbert will be able to come to us? Adeline and Louis have been kindly pressing me to extend our visit here; but, whenever your brother can obtain a holiday, we must give him the benefit of our pure bracing sea-breezes at Northwold."

"He mentioned next week as the probable time, but promised to write again to fix the exact day; his rector was absent and I believe Herbert's arrangements depended on his return," replied Edith.

"Then I think we may accept your kind proposition," said Sir Edward Leslie, addressing his cousin, "and shall have much pleasure in remaining your's and Louis's guests, till the beginning of next week."

"Have you received any answer," asked Adeline, "to your communication, from the present tenant of Northwold Hall?"

"I have only heard that Mr. Stuart is likely to be in town in the course of a few days, he was in Scotland when my letter arrived, I believe."

"Then I hope your prolonged stay with us will enable you to arrange all matters of business before leaving town," said his cousin.

"Yes, it will save my returning to London again so soon as would otherwise have been rendered necessary," was the reply; "and I have already ascertained that the lease expires at midsummer, so I trust there will be no obstacle to our taking possession of the Hall early in August."

"Do you think the necessary repairs can be completed so soon?" asked Edith. "To say the truth, I secretly hoped not, and thought to spend that month, and the beginning of September, in our dear little happy cottage home."

Her husband shook his head, saying—"I am sorry for you, Edie, as I have resolved to leave no stone unturned to have my own way on this occasion, and to disappoint your unfortunate wish."

He soon after left the room, when Adeline continued the same subject. "I know from Louis, that Edward has been, and is, most anxious not to be prevented accomplishing his object, though till he could have good grounds for hoping to be able to do so, he said he would not mention his wish to you."

"I can guess it now," replied Edith, "and it is very natural that he should desire the birth

of his child, perhaps his son and heir, to take place in the ancestral home ; yet, personally, I should have much preferred at such a time being in our comfortable, but quiet little cottage."

"I hope all will take place happily, and as comfortably at the Hall, as in the little snug-gery," said Adeline de Bouillé kindly, adding, "you will let me be your guest then, and help to take care of you, and Edward also."

"Thank you, I shall certainly not decline so kind and agreeable an offer," replied Edith Leslie.

The following week Herbert arrived at Glen Cottage, and soon after received the promised particulars regarding the German oculist from Miss Monck.

"Edith," exclaimed her brother, "have you an inclination for a drive this morning? I want particularly to find Mrs. Vernon at home, and if you accompany me, an early visit will be excused."

"I shall be very happy to take you there under my powerful protection," replied his sister, smiling ; "but what, may I inquire, is the cause of your extreme eagerness to see Janet Vernon on the present occasion?"

"I suppose I must confide it to you, Edith,

but do not be too sanguine, lest you should suffer disappointment. When I dined at the house of a Mr. Sholton (of whom you have heard me speak, as a kind co-operator in all Mr. Ashby's philanthropical schemes at Wilmington), I met there a young lady."

"Indeed, it becomes interesting," observed his sister, archly.

"No, you are quite on a wrong scent this time, madam, I assure you, clever diviner as you usually prove. This fair lady," continued Herbert, "was a Miss Monck, staying with Mrs. Sholton, and in the course of the evening on which I met Lord Westfield there, she afforded much interest to the company in general, and to myself in particular, by an account received by her from a friend in Germany, of a very skilful oculist, who has effected some peculiarly wonderful cures in cases before considered hopeless."

"And you thought of dear Alice," exclaimed Edith, eagerly.

"Yes; now you have guessed my secret rightly," replied her brother; "and having ascertained that Dr. Pfeiffer is expected to London next month, I think no time

should be lost in making an appointment with him, as he will certainly be overwhelmed with engagements."

"You are quite right, and we will order the pony-chaise immediately, that we may find Janet before she goes out, as she usually is in the habit of driving or walking after luncheon."

"Are you not expecting Alice soon, to stay with you?" asked Herbert, as they drove along the green lanes, now rich with spring flowers of varied hues.

"I hope she will pay her visit whilst you are here," replied Edith, "it is long since you have seen her, and you, I remember, were particularly fond of the tones of her voice. When last I heard her sing, I thought, if possible, they were more beautiful than ever."

"Yes; I always fancied there was something in her voice unlike all others I have ever heard," observed the young clergyman. "I should not like," continued he, "to raise hopes in her calm breast, unless there were strong grounds for believing in their happy consummation; but we must place this information in the hands of her family, and leave it to them to act as they think to be wisest and best in this matter."

“And then,” added Edith, “we must commit the event to His keeping who in mercy took her sight away, and can and will restore it in the abundance of His loving kindness, if He sees it to be well for His child.”

They found Mrs. Vernon in the garden, superintending the cutting out and formation of some new flower-beds.

“I am very glad to see you, especially to-day,” was her salutation to her visitors, “for I want some good opinion regarding these designs.”

“They appear very complicated,” observed Mr. Howard, “I should be sorry to have the responsibility of being the gardener to put them into execution.”

“Yes; they are absurdly minute and intricate, and though they are the productions of a professional landscape gardener, and will doubtless cost some money, I am presumptuous enough to fancy I can design an equally pretty and less troublesome flower-plot,” rejoined Mrs. Vernon; “but you must come into the drawing-room, and I will show you some of my plans.”

Several were examined, a few alterations suggested, and thus this weighty concern being put at rest, Edith introduced the subject of their

morning visit, into which, as they anticipated, Mrs. Vernon entered with deep interest, undertaking to inform her parents immediately of Dr. Pfeiffer's great reputation, and expected arrival in London.

During Herbert's stay at Glen Cottage, the blind girl also passed some weeks there, and at her sister Janet's residence, and Lady Leslie, for the first time, suspected the existence of a warmer feeling than pity or admiration in her brother's heart towards her favourite pupil. He was never weary of listening to her music, and often joined his own full voice to hers ; he would read aloud for hours, by which his sister also benefited ; but his constant appeals to Alice's taste and opinions, plainly betrayed for whom he selected the books, which passed away thus pleasantly and profitably days which, during the wet weather, would, but for the interest of indoor pursuits, have proved long, if not wearisome.

When the time came for his return to his clerical duties at Wilmington, Edith heard him bemoan, as he had never done before, the loneliness of his bachelor lodgings, and contrast their

desolate aspect with the bright happy weeks he had passed at Northwold.

"You are so full of blessed occupations there," rejoined Alice, "and so earnest in pursuing them with your whole heart and soul, that you will have no leisure to remember the difference or to think of the petty discomforts of your curacy."

"I cannot so easily forget," replied Herbert, in a tone slightly piqued, but soon he added, "I almost wish I had not passed such a peculiarly happy holiday, and yet, that is a wrong and unthankful spirit to indulge. I am ashamed of myself; and that you should have known me give way to such sinful discontent."

"You have not lowered yourself in my estimation, Mr. Howard, by so candidly confessing to human feelings and frailties which all, the best, must be subject to at times, though not all, like yourself, would acknowledge their error to their fellow-creatures," replied Alice Harcourt, warmly, and then as if conscious of the fervency with which she had uttered her thoughts, she blushed, adding hurriedly, "I am sure you agree with me, dear Edith."

Not waiting for any reply from his sister, Herbert continued,—

“Your assurance is healing to me, Miss Harcourt, and shall send me back to Wilmington with fresh courage and renewed exertions to the duties and privileges of my office there.”

Thus they parted ; Lady Leslie promising to give Herbert early and constant information of Dr. Pfeiffner's opinion and proceedings. That gentleman's decision was favourable, and the operation was arranged to take place as early as his other engagements would permit. Joy as well as sorrow has killed before now, and when the glad news was gently broken to the blind girl, notwithstanding the tender caution which had been used in announcing it, she fainted senseless on the spot. It was long before she could realize the hope, having for many years deemed she should only recover the blessing of sight in the brighter world above.

“Do you really believe the operation will be successful?” asked she of her mother.

“Did not your father and myself see good reason to give full credence to Dr. Pfeiffner's opinion, we should never have risked disturbing

the peaceful content of our darling's mind," replied Mrs. Harcourt.

"And how did you hear of him, and where?" inquired Alice.

"Through Edith Leslie's brother, Mr. Howard, who, hearing of his fame, lost no time in procuring every information respecting Dr. Pfeiffer, and assisted us by every means in his power; it adds another link to our chain of gratitude to your dear friend through him."

"I shall like to think of owing such a blessing partly to him, he is so good; I wish all clergymen were like him," said Alice, earnestly.

"You then found him as estimable and agreeable as when he was staying here three years ago?" inquired her mother.

"Yes; he is worthy to be our dear Edith's brother; and I cannot wonder that her love for him is so deep and strong," replied Alice. "I wish he had an easier post, for it makes his sister often anxious, and yet I do not think he has ever told her how hard he really works; she said he looked thin and pale when he first arrived, and so much better when he left Northwold."

"He wants a wife to take care of him and share

his labours and anxieties," observed Mrs. Harcourt, in an apparently careless tone.

"Yes; I think a clergyman requires a helpmate more than most other men; but it is very important that the wife should be a fit helpmeet in the exact sense of the word;" replied Alice, "one who can enter into his hopes and fears; weep or rejoice with him over the scenes of sorrow or of joy which occur in his path of duty amongst his people, even when only known to her through his description, and above all one who, whilst giving every heed to his comfort and health, as far as in her lies, must never place a stumbling-block in his way by striving to save him from danger, at the expense of his solemn responsibilities."

"You have drawn a forcible and just outline of a clergyman's wife, dear Alice," said her mother, "and we will hope, to one so deserving of such a blessing, it will not be long left wanting."

"I do not think he would be easy to please," said Alice, rather quickly, as if the idea of his being soon suited with a companion was not exactly pleasant; then, as if afraid of her last observation being construed unfavourably for

him, she added, "I do not mean that he is capricious or unamiable, far from it, but he is fond of music and many other things, which I think he would not like to dispense with in his wife."

So ended the conversation for the present between the parent and child; but Alice's mother rightly guessed her daughter was far from indifferent to the young pastor, and determined to discover, if possible, whether there were any indications of the attachment being mutual, before she allowed her again to risk her peace by the enjoyment of his society. There had been a time when she would have scorned the notion of marrying a daughter of hers to a penniless curate, but now it was far otherwise; and with joy would she consign her Alice to the brother of Edith, if she learned that she was indeed the object of his sincere affection.

CHAPTER X.

"The village church—its humble flock—
Zeal, devotion, and approving heaven; his books and simple
life;
All these wretchedly exchanged, for what the world called
fortune.

TUPPER.

ON a bright sunny morning in June, Lady Leslie sat under the rustic verandah, chiefly made by her husband's skilful hands, occupied with some little garments, the making of which seemed a great pleasure; the stitches therein placed were as fine as those scarcely visible in the cambric bands with which her fingers had been occupied but three years ago. That had been a sister's—this a mother's privilege; her husband stood by her side before she knew it, and asked—

"What is occupying your thoughts so plea-

santly, to judge by the expression of your face, dear Edie?"

"You shall know them, Edward," she replied, "but I am not sure they were altogether satisfactory; I am afraid I was almost breaking the tenth commandment, and coveting another man's possessions, not for myself, it is true, but with reference to my own pleasure, I fear."

"Indeed! what can have induced my good little wife to be so wicked?" inquired Sir Edward Leslie, twining his fingers amongst the luxuriant dark tresses which hung in ringlets round her small white throat.

"I was thinking of Herbert, and building castles in the air on his account. I sometimes fancy his health is not sufficiently strong for his heavy work, and you know he is not one to give himself rest while a duty remains unperformed."

"Well," said her husband, "and what further? I suppose you wanted, Edie dear, to remove him from the sphere of usefulness, in which God has placed him, to some fairer lot of your own devising. Be not careful and over anxious about many things, be sure that when Almighty Wisdom sees fit to make him a shepherd in more refreshing pastures, such will be his portion."

At this moment the servant came to announce an early caller. "Mr. Courtenay wishes to see you, sir. He is in the drawing-room, but will be happy to come out, and begs he may not take you indoors this fine morning."

Sir Edward Leslie immediately went to receive his visitor, and Edith replaced the Lilliputian clothing in her basket, substituting some more fashionable crochet work, though in the useful form of a pair of warm slippers for her brother, in case the gentlemen should adjourn to the verandah. Her anticipations were speedily realised, and she had hardly completed the exchange when they made their appearance there.

"You are happy to be able to enjoy this lovely day, Lady Leslie," remarked Mr. Courtenay, "the want of health is a great denial; Mrs. Courtenay is very suffering as usual."

"I am truly sorry to hear it," rejoined Edith, "I had hoped she was feeling better; Mr. Stuart remarked that she appeared so much stronger at their evening party last Thursday."

"Oh, she exerted herself for the sake of a young friend, who is now on a visit at the Rectory, but I feel sure she will never be well

here; we have made trial of the climate more than five years, and, indeed, her medical advisers positively prohibit her remaining at Northwold another winter," continued Mr. Courtenay.

"Do you mean, then, to try Italy, or the south of France, this winter?" asked Edith.

"We have not decided at present," he replied, "but I called this morning chiefly to mention a subject I did not wish you to learn from another quarter, as I think it due to the courtesy and kindness I have received at Sir Edward and your hands, to inform you myself, that having obtained a promise of a living in a milder and warmer part of England, and near some of Mrs. Courtenay's relatives, I am about to resign my present incumbency into the hands of Lord Westfield."

For a few short moments both Sir Edward and his wife felt embarrassed; to express regret at his departure, which was really a subject of rejoicing, was impossible; but quickly recovering herself, Edith replied—

"We are extremely sorry to hear such an unfavourable account of Mrs. Courtenay's health, and trust the sacrifice you are making in leaving

this lovely place, will be amply compensated by her restoration to strength and enjoyment in a warmer atmosphere."

"It is a very beautiful spot, and has many advantages," observed Mr. Courtenay, "but some events have contributed to reconcile me to the change. The present Lord Westfield, though a very excellent man, is only an acquaintance of modern date, whereas his predecessor, and all the elder members of the family were very intimate and old friends of mine, and Heronden Hall has never been the same house to me since the old lord's death. In my own parish, the loss of the Stuarts will be irreparable, for, notwithstanding our different creeds, we have been on terms of the closest intimacy and friendship for more than five years, and you will at once perceive, that as I already possess the advantage and pleasure of your society here, in your translation to the Hall, I gain nothing, but lose much. I might mention several other changes in the neighbourhood, which have similarly affected our enjoyment, but, of course, had not Mrs. Courtenay's health rendered the removal imperative, we should have lingered on, indeed I could not well afford to

throw up so good a living but for the kindness of a friend, who has bestowed one upon me nearly as valuable in Devonshire."

"I trust it will prove all you desire," observed Sir Edward Leslie, "you are truly fortunate in stepping out of one pleasant berth into another so easily."

"Who my successor will be is not yet actually decided, at least, not signed, sealed, and delivered, but through representations made by myself, and others possessing much influence with his lordship, I have every reason to believe, he will be an excellent man, a friend of my own, who has often longed to reside in this neighbourhood. His health is not particularly good, and he would therefore require assistance, and if it would be agreeable to you, he would be most happy to engage the services of Mr. Howard, whom I mentioned, believing the arrangement would give you pleasure, Lady Leslie, and after gaining three years' experience he will not now turn away on account of the lightness of the task, I imagine, as he once did."

"Perhaps not," replied Lady Leslie, "at all events I should not now be on that side. I was only expressing my wish that he had a less laborious post, as you were announced, Mr.

Courtenay, and if your friend should become the Rector of Northwold, I shall certainly advocate my brother's acceptance of his offer of the curacy."

When their visitor was gone, Sir Edward Leslie remarked—"Your wishes have been speedily granted, at least there appears a fair probability of such a result; but you do not seem pleased now? what, a tear?" and he kissed it away.

"Yes, I have been very silly in building castles in the air, and now that they have all crumbled into dust, I am foolish enough to be disappointed. I did not fancy the living would have been given away so easily, at Mr. Courtenay's recommendation, after what fell from Lord Westfield some little time ago; but I will put on my bonnet and shawl, and stroll with you to the farm, if, as I suppose, you are going in that direction," and, leaving the room, she soon again appeared, equipped for the walk.

Rather more than a week had elapsed since Mr. Courtenay's visit, when, on their return from a drive, they found Lord Westfield's card, who had left a message with the servant, making

an appointment to call that evening. The dessert and wine still remained on the dining-table, when his Lordship was announced. Edith felt less amiably disposed than usual towards their guest, and was a shade less cordial in her welcome to him, but if he perceived it his own manner was not thereby influenced, and the conversation soon became easy and general.

"You perhaps have heard that the thorn in your side is about to be removed, Sir Edward, by Mr. Courtenay carrying his eloquence to Devonshire," observed Lord Westfield.

"Yes," replied that gentleman ; "Mr. Courtenay did us the honour to call and name the circumstance himself last week."

"And," added Lady Leslie, "to offer the curacy (though, perhaps, I ought not to mention that) to my brother on behalf of his friend and probable successor."

"Who might that be?" inquired Lord Westfield, in a peculiarly quiet tone, though the expression of his face betokened some slight amusement at Edith's remark.

"He did not vouchsafe us the name," she replied, "but mentioned that the said clergy-

man had indifferent health, and would require a curate."

"Indeed, I am sorry to hear it. I considered him fully capable, both mentally and bodily, to undertake the sole charge of this parish," continued their visitor.

"If it is not an impertinent question, may I ask his name?" said Sir Edward Leslie.

"Certainly, and I will answer it with much pleasure, as far as I know myself; but, though I have offered it to an individual, for whom I entertain a high esteem, I have not yet received his acceptance, seeing that I only posted the letter last evening." Lord Westfield paused, and then said, "Can you not guess, Lady Leslie? Then I must tell you. If I have my wish, Mr. Howard will be your Rector, and I shall expect you to submit to him as one of the powers that be, though your own and Sir Edward's junior by a few years."

Edith's heart was too full for some moments to permit the utterance of her feelings, but extending her hand to Herbert's noble patron, he understood her gratitude by its pressure of his own.

He would not receive their thanks, assuring them that he had not before enjoyed so pleasant an exercise of his power since he had inherited the family estates; "and," added he, "it was my bounden duty, when the opportunity was given me, to place poor Northwold under a more faithful pastor, and I might, I believe, look far and near before I found a more earnest and right-minded clergyman than your brother, by whose energetic labours, and your important and hearty co-operation with him in his endeavours, I confidently hope the meeting-houses will be emptied, and the parish church filled, and the sooner it becomes too small for his congregations, and necessitates the building of a new and larger one, the better pleased shall I feel, and be ready at any time to contribute my share to the expense."

This could not fail to prove most gratifying to Edith and her husband, and she reproached herself for having so misjudged their kind friend.

"I must tell you," continued he, "that I have never for a moment contemplated offering the living to any one but Mr. Howard. It is

true, that Mr. Courtenay made an application for the gentleman of whom he spoke to you, but I never gave him any reason to suppose I should bestow the gift on that individual; 'his wish was father to the thought,' and I suppose he flattered himself that his powers of eloquence were irresistible."

"Perhaps so. I trust the disappointment will not prove too bitter," rejoined Sir Edward Leslie, in an amused tone. "As the offer of the curacy was made specially to you, Edith, for your brother, I shall leave the delicate task to your woman's wit, to decline it on the ground that Herbert will not require a rector at Northwold, nor Mr. Courtenay's friend a curate here."

How bright was their prospect. If clouds had for a while seemed their allotted portion, surely now the sky was clear and unshadowed by aught of earthly ill.

"Dear Edward," said Edith, that evening, before retiring to rest, "we must not only lift our hearts to our heavenly Father in thankfulness for the mercies showered down so plentifully upon us, but also seek the grace which

has supported us through sorrow, to keep us safe amidst prosperity, lest, surrounded by all that we can wish for ourselves and others, we become careless of our Christian warfare, and forget Him who hath done such great things for us."

CHAPTER XI.

“ At his approach complaint grew mild,
And when his hand unbarred the shutter,
The clammy lips of fever smiled
The welcome, which they could not utter.
PRAED.

MEANWHILE, what is passing at Wilmington? to the glad news announced at Glen Cottage, the principal person concerned is yet a stranger. Herbert has been of late fully occupied by a great increase of illness in his district; early and late has found him by the sick or dying-bed, rousing the sinner from his dangerous sleep, striving to awe him by the terrors of the Lord, and then to melt him by the love of the Redeemer; or carrying comfort, hope, and peace to the humble but trembling believer, and taking away the darkness and fear which encom-

pass the tomb, by pointing to the Guide, who will lead through the valley and shadow of death, and open the gate of everlasting life.

These labours of the young minister fortunately left him small leisure for thoughts of himself, his lesser hopes and fears, yet his anxiety was daily becoming more intense to hear tidings of Alice's fate. Surely, ere now, had all been well and happily accomplished, he must have heard; and his heart sickened with hope deferred. His work for the day was not half done, but he would turn aside a few steps, to his lodgings, to ascertain if the postman had brought for him the desired letter—and Northwold budgets always came by the afternoon delivery. He meets his landlady at the door, and asks—

“Has the postman passed yet, Mrs. Williams?”

“Yes, sir, nearly half an hour ago. I did not take the letters myself, but the maid received them, and carried some up-stairs, to your room, I believe,” replied the neatly dressed old lady.

A few strides took Herbert up the narrow flight which led to his apartments, and there, on the table, lay several letters, but none from

Edith. One is a printed circular, perhaps the others are similarly uninteresting. The handwriting of all are strange to him—no, the undermost is from Mr. Walton; then that shall be read as he pursues his round, and placing the others in his pocket for a more leisure opportunity, he takes a biscuit and a glass of wine, and leaves the house. But his thoughts are travelling to Langley Park, where the operation was to be performed—oh, surely the oculist has not held out false hopes, or been himself mistaken! The suggestion to his mind of such a possible result, is too painful and agitating, he feels unfitted by it for the work before him.

But it must be achieved, and he will forget himself in the troubles of his flock. He knocks at the door of a parishioner, whose sick child he must not delay to visit; a gentle voice bids him enter, and greets him kindly and gratefully. A fair young girl, perhaps fourteen, lies on a couch near the window; want and sorrow had made still further inroads on an always delicate frame; the sunken, yet bright eye, the hectic bloom on her cheek, and the hollow cough, tells the sad tale of consumption, alas! too common in manufacturing towns.

"How are you feeling to-day?" inquired the young curate.

"Rather weaker, sir, thank you," was the reply.

"Your room is very hot; an open window would refresh you, I think, if you are not afraid of the outward air for your cough," continued Herbert; "shall I unfasten the casement?"

"It does not open, sir; it was broken last winter, and has been only nailed in since. The agent said the houses were not worth throwing money away upon," replied the sick girl.

"If you find the heat oppressive, I will get it repaired."

"I should, indeed, be most thankful, Mr. Howard. I long to breathe some fresh air, and am too weak to do more than be carried down and laid here for the day, whilst father and mother are at the factory. Here is the Bible, sir; but perhaps you have not time to stay and read to-day. I know there is so much illness about, and many who need your comfort more than I do, for I can read myself, which some cannot."

"I can spare a few minutes, and should be sorry to leave you, Mary, without reading at

least part of a chapter," replied the clergyman. The portion heard, and some lessons of consolation and instruction drawn from it, and listened to attentively by the invalid, Herbert rose to depart, promising to send some one to mend the window in the course of the next day. Mary then said—

"I think you might be able to comfort my poor neighbour next door, though she will hear nothing from any one else; you will excuse my taking the liberty of mentioning her to you."

"Thank you for doing so, Mary. Has any affliction fallen upon her, or what is her burden?" asked Herbert.

"She has been deserted by her son. And always loved him so much, that people used to say something would happen to him."

"I will go there at once;" and so saying, the curate lifted the latch upon another scene of sorrow.

It appeared, that two days since, a recruiting sergeant had entered the town, and spent his money freely and successfully at the public-house, in treating any young men whom he considered of the likely sort to enlist. Many

were the sad scenes and heart-rending partings, —wives from their husbands, children from their parents, and, in one case, “the only son of his mother, and she was a widow,” had, under the influence and excitement of drink, beguiled by the flattery bestowed on him by the sergeant, accepted the Queen’s shilling, forgetful of her who had loved him as a mother only can love, who had watched and tended his infancy and childhood, in sickness and in health, often depriving herself of a meal, that he might not feel the pangs of hunger. Now, aged and infirm, who would labour for her, and provide her with the necessaries of life, in her time of feebleness and helplessness? after a life of honest industry, the workhouse must be her home, deserted by her ungrateful child. When the fumes of drink had passed away next morning, these thoughts rushed into the lad’s mind, and overwhelmed him with remorse; but then it was too late, he was enlisted, and must serve his time. He with difficulty extricated himself from the almost frantic grasp with which the poor mother clung to him in her agony of grief, and then joined the little band of recruits, which marched out of the town to the sound of fife and drum, the

gay coloured streamers from their hats contrasting sadly, in some cases, with the melancholy faces that wore them.

Surely there are enough brave and willing hearts in good old England still, ready to fight for their Queen and country, without having recourse to so base a means to fill the ranks of our army. Never fear but that enough may be found to volunteer, from a desire to copy the deeds of bravery that have shed glory on the British soldier's name in ages past, and let not that lustre be dimmed by this method of replenishing the lines; men that are entrapped whilst in a state of intoxication, are surely not the materials we should choose to guard our altars and our homes.

But to return to the widowed mother. There she sat by her desolate hearth, rocking herself to and fro in her chair, in restless misery. Her neighbours having failed to afford comfort, had now left her alone, and thus Herbert found the poor woman. His words fell on a deaf ear, deaf to all remonstrance at her passionate and sinful grief. The ingratitude of her son had stung her to the quick—none could have done so much, and received such a bitter recompense.

He let her first pour out her tale of woe, sympathised with her wretchedness, and promised relief, then, when she had exhausted herself with the violence of her sorrow, he strove again to speak the only words which could heal her aching wounds.

He told her of a kind Brother man, who left his Father, and a home of happiness and beauty, and came to dwell amongst the poor, who, whilst relieving their necessities, left himself empty, suffered the pangs of hunger and of thirst, shivered in the cold night blast, but murmured not, who had no shelter from the storm ; " the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but he had not where to lay his head." Many were the sufferers he raised from the gates of death ; he fed the hungry, healed the lame, and cured the blind. Oh, must they not have loved him well ! did he meet with gratitude in return ? No ; the very multitudes who had witnessed his goodness and tender loving-kindness, who had eaten of his bread, laid snares for him ; they took up stones to cast at him ; they laid in wait to kill him ; and when his works of charity and mercy were accomplished, and life, health, and happiness

for evermore offered to them, without money and without price, think you they accepted the boon with wonder and with praise? Oh, no! those very men, to whom he proffered such glorious bliss, rejected it with scorn, and became his murderers. That mild brow, which had been saddened by the sight of sin, sorrow, and ingratitude, they bound with cruel thorns; those hands, which had so often administered to the necessities of the poor and miserable, they pierced with nails; and put the finishing stroke to their wickedness by stretching on the agonising Cross the Lord of love and glory.

The young pastor paused; silent tears coursed each other down the widow's cheek; the shaft had found its unerring way; the Saviour to whom she had so long barred her heart had at last entrance gained; she laid her burden and her grief at his feet, and felt no longer desolate; she knelt whilst the messenger of glad tidings poured forth a supplication to the God of the widow, and asked that resigning her will to Him, she might find that peace which the world can neither give nor take away. Promising to visit the poor woman again in the course of a few days, Herbert went on his way

rejoicing—his own cares forgotten in the sympathy he felt for the trials of those around him.

After visiting some others, who stood in similar need of comfort, late in the evening, he returned home, not, however, till he had seen a carpenter, and given an order for the sick girl's window to be placed in proper repair. On reaching his lodgings, he took off his light summer overcoat, and remembering he had placed several letters in the pocket, now took them out, and whilst waiting for his little dinner to appear—which his landlady declared must "be cruelly done to death"—he proceeded to peruse their contents, and the last proved to be written by Lord Westfield, offering to him in the kindest and most gratifying manner, the now vacant living of Northwold.

He could hardly believe his senses; was he asleep and dreaming, after the long and fatiguing day's work? this seemed contradicted by the very real appearance of the smoking mutton chops and potatoes before him, and the letter still remained in sight. He had never suspected that Mr. Courtenay's tenancy of Northwold would terminate but with his life, which was a

very good one, having heard that gentleman extol the advantages and beauties of his home as beyond compare. That he should have thrown it up, and that Herbert Howard, the *sub-curate* of Wilmington, as Mr. Courtenay had named him, should be appointed his successor, seemed truly marvellous.

When, at last, he realised the actual state of things, unfeigned thankfulness to the Giver of all good things was his first emotion, for "*l'homme propose mais Dieu dispose.*" How kind and generous in Lord Westfield! From his knowledge of that nobleman's high Christian character, he was aware that, had he not deemed him at least earnest and humbly anxious to fulfil his sacred duties, he never would have placed a flock under his charge; but yet Herbert felt that this happy event must be greatly owing to the friendship and mutual esteem which existed between his lordship and his brother and sister. "Thus another blessing I feel coming in part from dear good Edith," said he to himself.

He must communicate these tidings at once to his excellent rector, whom he regarded with little less than filial reverence. The distance

between his dwelling and the parsonage was traversed in a shorter time than had ever carried the curate there before. His welcome was, as usual, warm and friendly.

"I hope you are come to spend the evening, or the remainder of it, Mr. Howard, and not to fetch Mr. Ashby away to any more sad cases—he has had enough for one day?" said the rector's wife.

"I have not come on any painful errand, I am glad to say, Mrs. Ashby indeed it is on business of my own," replied Herbert.

"Always glad to see you, on any occasion," was the kind rejoinder of Mr. Ashby; "and now your face denotes pleasant news."

"There is but one alloy in it—leaving you, dear sir, and many who have been so kind to the lonely young curate; but will you read this?" and Herbert placed Lord Westfield's letter in his Rector's hands.

Mr. Ashby grasped his, and, with an honest English shake, wished him joy of his happy portion. "When do you want to run away?" asked he.

"Of course that must entirely depend on you, sir, I shall not leave till you have supplied

my place ; in fact, I shall remain till it is convenient to you to part with me."

"You might wait rather longer than your friends would approve, if you stayed till I could feel willing to dismiss you," replied Mr. Ashby, smiling kindly. "But I think I can promise to let you off at Michaelmas, at which time, I believe, Mr. Courtenay resigns the living ; indeed, I consider that you ought to have a month's holiday before you take this sole charge upon yourself, so, on second thoughts, I will free you after the end of August. Though very sorry to lose you, as my fellow-helper here, I rejoice at this happy dispensation of Providence for you, as I do not believe that your health, for a permanence, would bear either the work or the climate of this place, and at Northwold—where you may expect me to make my appearance some bright day—I understand you have there fine sea-breezes, and not more than half the number of inhabitants which are here placed under your care alone."

"I am, indeed, greatly blessed, Mr. Ashby," replied Herbert ; "it only seems too bright for an erring mortal's lot, but you will, I know,

give me the benefit of your prayers, when I am far away, that I may strive to labour, in some measure, in a manner worthy of my high calling, and of the many blessings showered so richly upon me."

CHAPTER XII.

"Her looks seemed lifted to the skies,
Too pure for love of mortals,
As if they drew angelic eyes
To greet thee at heaven's portals."

CAMPBELL.

A FAIR girl is kneeling in her little chamber, near an open window; her hands are clasped, and her eyes upraised towards heaven; but she sees only in imagination the clear blue sky, in which the sun is shining brightly; yet, as she breathes the sweet fresh air, she fancies, with no earthly barrier intervening, her prayers can the readier ascend to the mighty Maker of the universe. She is asking that this beautiful world, with its many treasures of delight, made for the enjoyment of thankless man, may no longer remain a sealed book to her; that the

faces of all those dear to her may become familiar to her eye ; and now what moves that tear, which slowly finds its way down her soft cheek like a dewdrop on the rose? Perhaps the blessing so earnestly sought may be denied, so she must not ask it unreservedly, but only if infinite wisdom sees fit to grant the boon, and if in hidden mercy her eyes are never again to gaze upon the fair and pleasant things of earth, she prays that no murmur may be allowed to rise within her heart, but that her will may blend in sweet harmony with her heavenly Father's most holy and righteous decree—

“ We kneel how weak, we rise how full of power.”

Alice Harcourt rose, calm, refreshed, and strengthened for the event of the day. Come weal, come woe, her heart was fixed ; she would sing and give praise. It was still early when her mother entered her room ; for Alice knew by experience that the first hours of the day are those when the soul can best hold communion with its God, before the world with its cares and employments have cast their shadows over us. The birds sing sweetest in the early dawn—it is their morning hymn of praise that they are then

warbling ; the sunbeams are milder, and shed a purer and more tranquil light on all around.

“ There are set awful hours
Twixt heaven and us ; the manna was not good
After sunrising ; far day sullies flowers.”

“ You are looking well, dearest,” said her mother ; “ I hope you have slept better than myself.”

“ Yes, thank you, dear mamma, I did not wake much before my usual hour, and I feel quite well and comfortable : you must not be so anxious about me, all will be well ; you, I am sure, believe it.”

“ I know it must be so, dear child ; but my weaker faith cannot grasp it with the firm hold your purer spirit can,” replied Mrs. Harcourt. “ Edith would have wished to have been with us to-day,” she continued, “ but it could not be without much risk to herself in her present state of health.”

“ She will be with us in thought if she knows the day,” rejoined Alice.

“ I think most probably Sir Edward Leslie has kept the exact time from her, lest, in her intense affection for you, the excitement and suspense should prove injurious,” said Mrs.

Harcourt; "but she must be one of the first to learn the glad tidings, if all be as we desire."

"And Mr. Howard, to whom we owe our knowledge of Dr. Pfeiffer, ought to be informed, I think," said Alice; "at least he expressed great anxiety to know the result."

"He has certainly a claim upon us, and shall not be forgotten," replied her mother.

Who does not know and has not felt the agony of suspense? minutes seem hours whilst waiting to learn the crisis of our fate. The father is there—he holds one of his loved child's hands in his; each knows what the other feels; to him, whose tender love had often in former years soothed and healed the wounds inflicted by the other parent's neglect, is reserved the first moment of unutterable joy and thankfulness when light flashes on her long darkened eyes; the first beaming look of affection is cast on him, and she is clasped to his breast in silent, fathomless love. The mother, in the adjoining room, unable to control her feelings sufficiently to remain upon the spot, hears the cry of joy, and in turn receives her child in her arms and meets her gaze of tenderness.

The German oculist turns away for a few moments to leave the family group unchecked by a stranger's eye, and to hide a something in his own which suddenly reminds him that he must have taken cold in his last night's journey from town, and necessitates the use of his red and yellow bandana. Now he must be cruel; for the sake of their future happiness not another minute's law will he grant.

"You must again exercise the virtue of patience, young lady," he said; "I have allowed you fully as much license as is safe for the present."

Alice cheerfully and gratefully submitted to her eyes being bandaged, in which state they were to remain for some days.

"At the expiration of that time," continued Dr. Pfeiffner, "the bandages may be gradually laid aside first in the evening, when the brightness of the sunlight is gone, and by degrees in the course of the daytime in a room, with the blinds kept down, to exclude the too dazzling brilliancy of sunshine; and," added the doctor, "let me recommend you to wear a broad, flapping hat, unless you prefer a bonnet disguised with one of those blue things you call uglies, for such truly they are." And with this

parting injunction Dr. Pfeiffner took his leave, having received the heartfelt thanks of the Harcourts, for the share he had taken in the restoration of their dear one's sight.

But chiefly were their hearts overflowing with praise and gratitude to the Great Physician, who had permitted an earthly one to be the instrument of opening the eyes of one so long blind. Janet wrote the happy news to Edith, promising her the pleasure of seeing Alice early in September, when she was coming to pay a visit to Horace and herself at their home, and would also pass a short time at Northwold.

As if to crown his blessings, the day after we left Herbert almost stunned with his good fortune, he received again a letter directed in a hand unknown to him; this time he did not let it wait six hours before possessing himself of its contents; perhaps he had grown wiser by experience, and learnt a lesson from the event of the preceding day, or was it the post-mark on the cover, which people are so apt to examine, as a clue to the contents, instead of solving the problem, by breaking the seal at once? We are inclined to think that the "Lang-

ley" stamp, for that village had been lately dignified by the acquisition of a post-office, prevented any unavoidable delay in the present occasion. The writer was Mr. Harcourt, who communicated the joyful intelligence that Alice's large, mild, blue eyes now beamed with light and intelligence, and added full expression to the pensive beauty of her countenance; much of thanks was added by the grateful father for the thoughtfulness which had first brought to their knowledge the existence of the foreign oculist.

How long in anticipation did the next two months appear, which must elapse before Herbert would be released from his present duties! Then he should be at Northwold, and there, in the neighbourhood of her elder sister's married home, have a better chance of meeting with the object of his love. Then, if only she smiled on his suit, when master of a pretty parsonage, and £700 a-year, might he not venture to ask her at her father's hand, with some hopes of success? But, alas, those two months!—no longer blind, with so many charms, with a mind more richly cultivated and endowed with more gifts than even commonly fall to the lot of the fair sex, would she not have many suitors, and they would urge

their cause, assisted by circumstance and opportunity, whilst he was absent, pining in fetters for the sound of her sweet voice, and for a kind look of those dear eyes.

Jealous and maddening thoughts chased one another through his brain. One moment he decided to write and plead his love, at another, he resolved to urge his claims in person; but, at last, exhausted by the excitement of his own impassioned feelings, he flung himself on the sofa and slept. His waking meditations were calmer and more reasonable, and he contented himself by replying to Mr. Harcourt's letter, with expressions of his own hearty participation in their thankfulness and cause for rejoicing, adding, only, as regarded himself, that it would ever be a subject of deep happiness to him that he had been permitted to be an humble wheel in the human machinery which had been used to bring about the blissful result. His prospects and future residence at Northwold, he communicated, but came to the conclusion, that having no positive grounds for belief in the existence of any mutual affection on Alice's part, further than her eager manner when they had parted at Glen Cottage, it would be folly to risk failure

by too great precipitancy. If they were thrown together as he hoped might be the case in the autumn, that feeling on her part, if it did indeed exist, would then have opportunity for increasing in power and warmth, and his strong and deeply-loving nature knew, with anything less than a full return and whole heart, his aspirations would not be satisfied. Lastly, though not least, if she, whom he loved, were really destined to be the helpmate of his labours in his pastoral course, and the sharer of his joys and griefs, the fulfilment of the plainly appointed duties now before him, which could neither be omitted, nor negligently performed without guilt, would certainly not be allowed to be the means of preventing the attainment of his wishes. This last consideration decided him to remain at his post, and by a diligent discharge of his ministerial labours during the remainder of the short time longer he was placed at Wilmington, lay up solid store of after satisfaction and peace.

In a course of active service, there is a tone and an excitement, by which it carries with it, in a great measure, its own reward; and so found Herbert, whilst he entered with renewed

earnestness and vigour on the several works he and his fellow curate were assisting Mr. Ashby to carry out. If we more thoroughly realised that which most who entertain any serious ideas admit in theory, namely, that there is an Almighty Governor of this world, and all things therein, how many clouds which we create for ourselves, would vanish from our pathway, instead of spreading gloom and shade around us. Erase chance from the dictionary, believe firmly that

"Thou cam'st not to thy place by accident,
It is the very place God meant for thee."

And when thus acknowledging that the wheels are set in motion by an unseen hand who both knows and directs their course, surely anxiety and perplexity would be less frequent visitors than they now are in our hearts, and by our firesides.

CHAPTER XIII.

"A babe in the house is a well-spring of pleasure."

TUPPER.

"Oh, should my gentle child be spared to manhood's years like me,
A holier and a wiser man I trust that he will be."

MOULTRIE.

EDITH'S joy had been very great when the news of Alice's recovery of sight was communicated to her, and she looked forward with peculiar pleasure to receiving her as a visitor at Northwold Hall, in September. The tone of her brother's letters had betrayed his evident pleasure at the prospect of being again in the society of the young girl, whose prepossession for Herbert had already been slightly hinted at by Mrs. Harcourt, she being desirous of ascertaining Edith's opinion, before she hazarded her daughter's peace of mind by allowing her to visit under the same roof with the young clergyman. Lady Leslie was as yet

not a confidant of either party, and so informed her friend, but she made Mrs. Harcourt acquainted with her own impressions on the subject.

Sir Edward Leslie, meanwhile, was indefatigable in pressing on the necessary repairs at the Hall, and accomplished his cherished object of moving his wife and establishment there in the commencement of the month of August. All being prepared for her comfortable reception, the last evening was spent in the quiet little cottage home which had witnessed much love and happiness, and in which many useful schemes had been propounded and planned : but providence having transplanted them into a larger and more extensive sphere of usefulness, they doubted not that in the hall as in the hut, true enjoyment would spring from their endeavours to serve their generation, in the station to which they had been called, and within their own hearts and mutual affection they possessed the never-failing source of true pleasure—

“By soft endearments in kind strife,
Lightening the load of daily life.”

“I shall be ready at the Hall to receive you, dear Edie ; at what time have you ordered the

carriage?" asked her husband, as he, with his hat in hand, prepared to walk across the fields to see that everything was finished as he wished, for the arrival of its mistress.

"I have several little things to arrange, so I thought of coming after luncheon if you like."

"Very well; I shall not be out of sight of the carriage drive, whenever you arrive," rejoined Sir Edward.

Edith had last parting injunctions to give respecting the flowers she had planted and trained, and to which she felt a degree of attachment; but all was at length completed, and the last charge given to the old dame who was to become seneschal of the cottage, till fresh inmates were found for it, and the coachman received the signal for departure, touched his bright chesnut horses, and took the way to the Hall.

After a short drive they reached the Park gates, which were thrown open, and a shout arose which almost startled Edith; the two sides of the road were lined with her husband's labourers and workmen, who had assembled there to give her a hearty welcome, as they had done to their master an hour before. Cheer followed cheer, for Edith had during her three years' residence

amongst them, found her way to their hearts, and enlisted their warmest and best feelings on her side. Edith tried to thank the honest fellows, but the sudden pleasure had choked her utterance; they, however, understood her feelings, for the lower class are shrewd enough, and can and do form very correct estimates of the characters of their superiors in birth and station. With one last shout, which rent the air, and might have been heard far and wide, "Long live our true friends, Sir Edward and Lady Leslie, and God bless them !" the carriage was suffered to pass on.

When the entrance-court was reached, Edith saw her husband standing on the steps of the porch, awaiting her, and a vision shot through her mind of her arrival at another fine old English country house, when her father greeted the timid girl, and welcomed her to that paternal home, from which she was to be so soon cast out, an orphan and penniless. Present emotions, and past reminiscences, nearly overpowered her, and Sir Edward was alarmed at her pallor; taking her quickly through the hall, in which the servants had assembled to witness the arrival, he bade her rest on the sofa in the drawing-room.

"I fear this excitement has been too much for you, dearest Edie, it was foolish of me not to prevent it, but when the poor fellows saluted me, and asked when you would arrive, I had not the heart to damp their pleasure by forbidding it."

"Oh, no, Edward, I would not have had their kind hearts vexed for worlds," said she, "I feel already better, but it was so totally unexpected that it startled me, just emerging from the shady, quiet lane."

"Had I known of their intentions earlier, I should have forewarned you," replied her husband, "but I was completely taken by surprise myself."

"I am quite well again now, Edward, and I hope we shall never lose, but always strive to deserve, their honest love."

"They have a holiday, and are enjoying a game of cricket; I must order them something to drink our healths presently, when their play is over," said Sir Edward; "but they need not have it here, or near the house, to electrify you again, Edie."

"Oh, pray make no difference on my account. I shall not mind any noise now, and by your side I can hear you thank them, and look my

gratitude without danger or fatigue," said his wife.

Sir Edward accordingly expressed the gratification they had both experienced from the cordial and hearty reception their neighbours had given to them both, and trusted that each year that they were permitted to pass amongst them, would bind them in stronger and faster bonds of union, each fulfilling the respective duties of the station in which God had placed them, and thus promoting and securing each others welfare and happiness.

Edith wrote to Herbert a full description of the pleasing manner in which her husband and herself had been welcomed to their future home ; adding that she had felt but one thing wanting, namely, to have had her dear brother by her side, to witness and share in their gratification.

A fortnight later saw Edith the happy and proud mother of a lovely boy, and surely, if any pride be innocent and allowable, it is a mother's, especially when, as in the present instance, joined with deep thankfulness.

"The day arrives, the moment wished and feared,
And now the mother's ear has caught his cry,
Oh ! grant the cherub to her asking eye."

Edith had always been a true baby lover; the cottage children would come and put out their little arms to come to her embrace, and into many a father and mother's heart had she thus gained entrance, by the loving caresses she bestowed upon their little ones. Often had she been amused at the fond partiality of the parent, who, in the plainest "bambino" ever looked upon, could see superlative charms, and now her turn of maternal weakness had arrived. The babe, and its prettily trimmed bassinette, with sprigged muslin draperies and sky-blue ribbons, was never from her side during the first few weeks of its existence, and such love lavished on the little stranger as only mothers can bestow, their well-spring of affection being truly inexhaustible. Madame de Bouillé was staying at Northwold during this period, and fully sympathised and entered into her cousin's joys.

"Adeline," said Sir Edward Leslie, "that foolish little wife of mine verily believes this little morsel inside that frill of Valenciennes lace, to be a paragon of babies."

"And the papa, who is stooping down to take a peep at the small individual, is quite devoid of all such folly and weakness," rejoined his cousin,

laughing, as he removed a delicate, blue, knitted coverlet, in his endeavour to find one of the tiny wax-like hands.

"Oh! I suppose it is no better than other people's piccaninnies, but being my own makes a slight difference to me, and gives it some greater degree of interest in my eyes," replied he smiling; "and besides, its clothes look snowy white, and all is refreshing and clean about it, and I cannot boast of such a baby-mania as might make these circumstances a matter of comparative indifference to some."

"Ah, you are talking at me, Edward," rejoined his wife, "but I assure you, I only patronise the sweet and tidy infants, amongst the poor people, though I can enjoy a romp with a little urchin in a coloured print frock and scarlet socks, as well, or better, than with a more aristocratic baby frilled in white embroidery, as the latter is usually more shy, and averse to sociability with strangers."

"Well, you shall nurse the whole cradled generation of this parish, if you like, Edith, whilst I confine my pretty attentions to this particular specimen," rejoined her husband, as he

lifted the sleeping child out of its ornamental little couch on to his knee.

"It is very well for you that the nurse is not present," remarked Adeline, "or you certainly would incur her indignation for disturbing her nursling in such a sweetly placid sleep."

"I don't mean to submit to her dictum," replied the father. "I expect Herbert to arrive every minute, I think I heard carriage wheels just now, and shall myself present his future godson to his admiring gaze, or as much as is perceptible of him, in this mass of wraps and flannel."

"I will yield you that privilege," remarked Edith, "on condition you do not make him catch cold, by removing so suddenly the shawls with which nurse has enveloped the little pet."

"I wonder he has not been smothered long ago, which would be a very ignominious end for the hope of the Leslie family," observed Sir Edward. "I am sure your cottage babies are not subjected to such hot beds, Edie."

"No; I agree with you that this matter is decidedly overdone; but do you not know that monthly nurses will reign supreme? it is useless to dispute their authority. After the christening, when Mrs. Caudle takes her departure, we will

change our plan, and bring the young gentleman up in a more Spartan fashion."

The door of the pretty sitting-room, which had been fitted up for Edith's own boudoir, now opened, and Herbert, with much affection, embraced his sister, and complimented her on her bright looks. "I am more deeply in your debt than ever, dearest Edie; for, in coming to take up my residence at Northwold, I cannot but feel it is mainly owing to you, without whom I know not where or what I should have been by this time." It was the first occasion on which the brother and sister had met, since Herbert's presentation to the living. "And," continued he, "how is the baby?"

"When you have leisure to devote to its inspection, I will introduce him to you," said Sir Edward Leslie, feigning a tone of pique, at notice not having been earlier taken of the important little personage he held in his arms. "This is my boy," continued he, "and I beg you to perceive that eyes, nose, and mouth, are as perfectly developed, as is usually the case at his early age."

"Indeed, I think he is a very fine little fellow," responded the young uncle; "I consider

myself a judge of such infant phenomena, meeting with so many in my visits amongst the poor, and christening not a few, on which latter account, I may be trusted with my bonny nephew now, I think."

"By the by," said Edith, "you have touched on a subject which for a while perplexed our wise heads, but you shall hear my solution of the difficulty. Edward and myself simultaneously placed our choice on you as one godpapa, and then the difficulty arose, who was to christen the prodigy? Certainly, not Mr. Courtenay, with his irreverential way of performing the service, had he been here, and he leaves the Sunday before that on which baby is to be christened; if you could have officiated, we should have preferred it, but that is impossible."

"Certainly," observed Herbert, "I cannot be sponsor and also christen my godchild, and am not willing to yield the first and greatest privilege."

"We have written to invite dear old Mr. Walton to pay us a visit at the end of this month, and to administer the sacrament of baptism to our child."

"That is a delightful arrangement," replied

her brother, "and will not only obviate every difficulty, but also give me the benefit of his support and assistance, on my first Sunday in my new parish ; and, may I ask, who are to be my co-sponsors?"

"Alice Harcourt, and an early friend of mine, Colonel Cameron," replied Sir Edward Leslie, "one to whose high principles and kind counsels I owe much of the happiness of my life. Ill had I fared amongst the wild spirits of that regiment, myself none of the steadiest by nature, but for his firm and invaluable friendship."

"I should have imagined you to have been always one of the good boys," said Herbert.

"Far otherwise, I assure you ; naturally of strong and impulsive feelings, I had undue liberty as a boy in many ways, whilst in others, my poor uncle's stern severity awed me into submission ; by experience, I soon found the danger of rebellion to any law of his, and thus was trained in strict discipline, which prepared me well for my after military career ; but any higher motives than honour and fear were not appreciated by him, and, therefore, never inculcated. My naturally hot temper was curbed in all that was

connected with himself, but at other times, I had no idea of the duty of controlling it."

"Then, was your present self-command solely brought about through your friend, Colonel Cameron's precepts, or by any more powerful engine?" inquired his brother-in-law; "but pardon me, perhaps I have asked a question bordering on unsuitable curiosity."

"No; I am willing to acquaint you with the circumstances, that you may the better appreciate the character of my friend, and your co-sponsor," replied Sir Edward Leslie. "To make a long story short, a dispute had arisen between myself and a young brother officer at the mess-table, or rather after the meal was concluded, and when we were heated with quite as much wine as was good for us, our language waxed warm, and those around poured oil on the flame. I deemed that his conduct had been underhand and dishonourable towards myself, lost my temper, and told him my opinion, in cutting terms. Twenty years ago, duels were not so uncommon as, thank God, they are in the present day; the result of my hot words was, that he called me out; I accepted the challenge, and place, time, and seconds, were settled on

the spot. The deadly interview was fixed for two in the next morning, of a summer moonlight night, if I may use such an Irishism.

“Late that evening, my friend, then Captain Cameron, accidentally overheard the conversation of some of the subalterns who had been present at the quarrel, and gathered that an encounter, of no friendly nature, was soon to take place. He suspected at once that I might be one of the principals, having observed my flushed and angry countenance, soon after I left the mess-table. It wanted but a few minutes of midnight, when he came hastily to my rooms and requested admittance. I was not undressed, but had thrown myself on my bed for an hour's rest. This confirmed his suspicions, and he frankly asked me if it were not so ; denial was impossible ; he spent the next hour in bringing before me, in the most powerful manner, the sinfulness of my intentions. I declared that I had no purpose or wish to take my adversary's life, and should probably shoot in the air ; but he combated one argument after another, till he left me not a leg to stand upon, concluding with the home-searching question—‘Do you believe in a heaven and

hell? if you fall, can you doubt which will receive you?"

"At last, the fear of God's wrath gained the ascendancy over the dread of man and his scorn and contempt, and I consented to quaff the bitterest draught I had ever tried. Accompanied by my true friend to within a short distance of the place of rendezvous, I sealed my word to summon moral courage and perform my duty; and it was to my proud and untamed spirit the hardest task I ever accomplished. Amid the sneers and amazement of all present, who had ever known me as the most fearless and daring, nay, I may say, foolhardy-fellow in the regiment, I drank the cup to the dregs, and declined to fulfil the engagement sinfully made in the heat of passion, at the same time, retracting and apologising for the expressions of which I had made use, derogatory to my adversary's character.

"The penance I paid for my folly was sharp, but not more so than I well deserved; my advances were met with no generosity, and the offer to shake hands altogether repulsed. I believe, as is generally the case in this world, the offender is less forgiving than the offended,

and the consciousness of his own unhandsome conduct towards myself, which had provoked my passion, placed a greater barrier between us than my hasty and now recalled words had done. He revenged himself on me by spreading unfair and garbled versions of this affair, no longer fearing any personal danger by so doing. My berth was not an easy one for many a long month, and I was looked upon shily by many of my former friends ; but supported by my kind adviser I weathered the storm and regained in time the esteem of all those whose friendship was worth possessing. Most of all, I dreaded lest the story might reach my uncle's ears, who would, in those days, have deemed an apology made by a Leslie, a stain in the family escutcheon ; but this trial I was spared.

“I think I have now told you enough to convince you of two things—that I was not a pattern youngster, and that I have good reason to call Colonel Cameron by the name of friend ; for he did far more than save my life ; that he was resolved to do in spite of myself, and, as he afterwards told me, would have placed me under arrest, had I remained deaf to his persuasions ; but that for which I owe him an eternal debt of

gratitude is, that he saved me from myself and my own intemperate passions, and led me to seek a higher aim than the praise or blame of man."

"You may well desire such a surety for your child," said Herbert, when the interesting recital was ended, "and accept my thanks, Edward, for allowing me to become acquainted with this crisis and turning-point, as I deem it, in your life; to stoop to an ungenerous nature, must have been a hard trial."

"Yes; but had my descent been easier and less precipitous, it would, in all probability, have failed to break the neck of my pride and headstrong passion which, thus broken down, by God's help, has, though often smouldering, never burst forth again."

"Our boy is to be named Herbert Cameron," observed Edith, "and his father says, that please God he lives to manhood, he shall know why he bears his second name, and learn to love and reverence his godfather for other reasons than his spiritual relationship to himself."

CHAPTER XIV.

"Such rural sounds,
If haply noticed by the musing mind,
Sweet interruption yield."

HURDLIS.

ALICE HARCOURT was on a visit to her brother and sister, Mr. and Mrs. Horace Vernon, and had already had the pleasure of looking on her dear friend Edith and the babe, to whom she was to act the part of sponsor at the approaching christening. She was to become Sir Edward and Lady Leslie's guest the week preceding this event. Herbert was disappointed to find that she was not yet an inmate of the Hall, and resolved to walk over the next morning to reward himself for the last two months' patience and resolution. Accordingly, soon after breakfast, he appeared equipped for his expedition, and

inquired if he could carry any messages for his sister beyond the usual compliments and loves which pass current between ladies in general.

"No, thank you. I think it is not improbable they may call here to-day, as it is some time since I have heard anything of them," replied Edith. "Do you know where Edward is? He might like to walk there with you."

"He is engaged with some person on business, and several others are expecting to see him in the hall, so I think it will be useless to wait for his companionship this morning," was her brother's answer. He certainly was in no mood for delay, and stood by the window swinging his walking cane round with great velocity, and Edith, taking the movement as an index of his present state of mind, placed no further obstacle in the way of his wishes, saying—

"Very well; I will tell Edward where you are gone, and if he is disposed for a stretch he will soon overtake you."

"Not so easily done as said," thought he, as, with rapid strides, he took the path through the wooded glades of the Park, leading in the direction of the neighbouring village which contained his centre of attraction. The rich and

varied views with which autumn tints the forest trees added great beauty to the surrounding country, while to the left lay the ocean, now calm and lovely in its rest, and vieing with the Mediterranean in the cerulean blue of its waters. Occasionally the crow of a cock pheasant might be heard, as yet a stranger to fear, and unscared by the sound of a not far distant gun, which ever and anon gave notice of the vicinity of sportsmen in pursuit of lesser game. The face of all nature wore its brightest smile, and enhanced to Herbert the enjoyment of his morning walk, but, had it been a foggy November day, it could hardly have damped his buoyant spirit, so truly says the poet—

“Our eyes see all around in gloom and glow
Hues of their own, fresh borrowed from the heart.”

As the young man emerged from the wood in the cornfield before him, he saw the unrelenting partridge shooters, amongst whom he recognised Lord Westfield and Horace Vernon, who welcomed him cordially. He had before taken an opportunity of personally thanking his excellent and munificent patron, during a visit of

that nobleman's at his friend Mr. Sholton's, near Wilmington.

"I suppose it is of no use to offer you my gun, Howard?" observed Mr. Vernon. "You were a capital shot, and beat us all hollow at Langley."

"Thank you, I have not shouldered one for more than three years," he replied.

"I am glad you are not one of the sporting parsons, not that I suspected you of anything of the sort," rejoined Lord Westfield; "but I know that some good men think no harm in taking a quiet walk in a friend's or brother's covers."

"Many much better men than myself pursue this recreation, and it is not for me to pass judgment on others," said Herbert, "especially as to his own Master, each must stand or fall; yet I think a clergyman is bound to avoid all things which can possibly give occasion to the enemies of religion to raise a slander against our holy office; even if we ourselves see no harm in the action we should, in my opinion, abstain from all appearance of evil, for the world, unfortunately, is too apt to judge of the gospel by the conduct of its professed followers, and chiefly of its ministers, on whom, being set on a hill,

the obligations to keep a jealous guard over their words and actions are peculiarly binding."

"You then believe, Howard, that shooting really does militate against a clergyman's influence?" remarked Mr. Vernon.

"I have no doubt that it very often has marred the usefulness of many amongst their parishioners, and the crack shot is not often the pastor to whom recourse will be had in the day of trouble or sickness," replied Herbert.

"There I think you have spoken a true word, but we must not linger or we shall lose sight of our companions. Were you bound to our house? if so I am sure the ladies will be happy to console you for my absence."

"Thank you, Mr. Vernon. If you think they will be at home I will take advantage of your kind permission and continue my walk there," and hastening his steps he proceeded on his way.

When he arrived the birds were flown. The servant did not vouchsafe any information, and Herbert could ask none, so he retraced his road, hoping he might find them at Northwold.

Whilst crossing some fields he heard the clatter of hoofs; the sound increased rapidly, and at last they seemed to be laid so fast to the

ground that he apprehended a horse must be running away. He quickly gained the hedge which divided him from the lane, sprang over it, and almost immediately after saw a horse coming at full speed and making efforts to dislodge its rider, in which it succeeded just before reaching the spot where he stood; in a moment he caught the animal's bridle and stayed its course, thus preventing the thrown lady from being dragged along in its mad fury, her foot being yet entangled in the stirrup. This he gently but promptly released from its perilous position, and hailing a labourer who was at work in an adjoining field, gave the horse into his charge, desiring him to hasten to the nearest cottage for female assistance. Thus he was at liberty to attend to the fair equestrian, who had fainted since her fall, partly from fright and partly stunned by the force with which her head struck the ground.

One glance told him it was Alice Harcourt. He removed her hat, with its Spanish plumes, thus letting the wavy, sunny tresses escape from their confinement; loosed the coloured handkerchief round her neck, and laid her softly on the mossy bank, hard by which a small, clear rivulet ran. He was still bathing her fair

temples when Mrs. Vernon and the groom arrived at the scene of the catastrophe.

It subsequently appeared that Janet Vernon had dismounted, to visit one of her pensioners, leaving her steed in the care of the servant. Whilst she was in the cottage, one of those travelling vans, covered with brushes, brooms, baskets, and all kinds of things, passed, and at the strange sight and noise of the jingling articles, the animal on which Alice rode, a spirited chesnut mare, took fright, and went off as hard as it could tear. The groom, having already two horses to hold, could render no assistance, but desired a child sitting at the garden stile to ask Mrs. Vernon to come out, which she did shortly after, and mounting, arrived without further delay at the place where she found Herbert Howard tending her sister. She immediately sent the man home, to desire that the carriage might be brought with the least possible loss of time.

“Do you think she is much hurt? and did you witness the accident?” asked Janet.

“I caught the bridle as your sister touched the ground, but unfortunately was not in time to intercept her fall. I hope the blow on the

head was lessened by her hat—and probably Miss Harcourt has fainted from the shock and terror, more than from any injury she has received,” said Herbert, wishing to allay Mrs. Vernon’s anxiety.

Help soon arrived from a neighbouring farmhouse, in the person of its mistress, a respectable and kind-hearted elderly woman, who, accompanied by her daughter, had brought with her all the simple but useful remedies she thought likely to be of service. Herbert, though longing to remain till she, whom he loved so well, should have recovered consciousness, felt that his presence was no longer necessary, and might possibly be embarrassing, when the young girl became aware of her situation, added to which, he could be of important use elsewhere, and taking the horse which the labourer had now returned with, he asked—

“May I go for your medical man, Mrs. Vernon?”

“Thank you, Mr. Howard; I shall, indeed, be extremely obliged if you will do so. Mr. Hamilton lives in Bergholt, rather more than five miles distant.”

“I trust, then, he will soon be with you, for

as this pretty mare has chosen to go so fast for her own pleasure, I shall certainly have no mercy on her on the present occasion."

"I hope she will not repeat her wild tricks with you," said Janet Vernon.

"Oh, no! she will have a heavier weight to carry, and a stronger hand to curb her headstrong will," replied Herbert, who, regardless of stirrups, galloped off at full speed, affording astonishment and amusement to the gaping cottagers, in the several villages through which he passed. In one of these he met the doctor, also riding, but not knowing him by sight, made direct for his residence, and by the servant's instructions, returned to the very place he had lately left.

After several failures, he was finally successful, and was about to accompany the surgeon back to Mr. Vernon's house, in his anxiety to gather tidings of Alice, when he remembered that bad news flies quickly, and that Edith might receive some exaggerated account of the accident, which, in her still delicate state, ought to be carefully guarded against. Herbert therefore rode home, begging Mr. Hamilton to say that he should call to inquire in less than an

hour's time. Leaving his steed in the yard, lest his appearance, thus strangely mounted, might alarm his sister, he took off his dusty overcoat, and proceeded at once to her boudoir. She was astonished to find him so soon returned.

"Have you been disappointed in the object of your walk?" she asked.

"Yes, Edith; that is to say, the ladies were not at home, and I met Mr. Vernon out shooting, on my way there; but I have seen both Mrs. Vernon and Alice since."

"Are they quite well? You look grave, Herbert; is anything the matter?"

"Nothing serious, I hope; so do not make yourself uneasy. I came back to tell you, for fear some absurd report might reach your ears," replied he, in as light and easy a tone as he could assume.

"What has happened, and to whom?" asked Edith, anxiously.

"Alice has had a fall from her horse, but I trust she is more frightened than hurt. However, I have been for the doctor, and thought it would be more satisfactory to all to hear his report, so I am going to ride on to inquire, and will take a note for you, if you like."

"Thank you, it shall be ready directly; but take some luncheon, it is on the table;" and a glass of wine was very acceptable to Herbert, after the excitement and fatigue of the morning.

Sir Edward Leslie meanwhile came in, and hearing the account, said—

"I shall ride with you, to learn how Miss Harcourt is."

"May I have a saddle placed on the chesnut mare," asked Herbert, "as ten miles, without stirrups, is as much as I fancy of such equestrian exercise."

"Certainly," and ringing the bell, Sir Edward gave the necessary order. Edith's note being ready, Herbert rose to depart. When he reached the hall, his brother-in-law exclaimed—

"You are lame; I dare say you hurt yourself. You had better attend to your foot, and let me ride to bring home the report;" but to this, as might be expected, the young man would not agree, saying—

"I believe the animal trod on my foot when I stopped her; but I have not thought of it, nor felt it, till a few moments ago. I am sure it will not hurt me to ride with stirrups, it is

only the dangling so long without that has made it ache."

When they arrived at Mr. Vernon's house, Janet informed them that the surgeon had found his patient recovered from the stunning effects of the fall, and pronounced the blow on her head to be slight, and of no moment, but that she was suffering much pain from her foot and ankle, which had been severely twisted and sprained by the entanglement of her habit.

"I know that Alice would like to see you, and express her thanks for your most opportune assistance, Mr. Howard," added she, "but she was at once taken to her room, and Mr. Hamilton has desired her to remain quietly there for the remainder of the day."

"With your permission, Mrs. Vernon, I will call to-morrow, in the hopes of then having that pleasure," said Herbert. "I only wish I could have been of more service, and thus saved Miss Harcourt from these painful consequences."

"Alice has never seen you, Mr. Howard, therefore, when you stood by her side and grasped the bridle, she was not aware who was her deliverer, but it seems she recognised the

tones of your voice before she entirely lost her consciousness, as she asked for you by name immediately on recovering, and told me she was sure it could be no other person, in which idea I, of course, confirmed her," said Janet Vernon.

This was a joyful hearing for Herbert, whose face flushed with pleasure at the recital, and he longed for the morrow, to hear it again from his loved one's own lips.

"I fear it will delay her visit to Northwold," said Sir Edward Leslie; "but Mr. Hamilton must engage to place his patient on her feet in time for the christening."

"Oh, yes," replied her sister; "there is nearly a fortnight to that day, and she always feels as much at home with dear Edith as here, so you may promise her there shall be no unnecessary delay."

As Herbert and his companion rode gently back to Northwold, but little conversation took place on any subject—the former being absorbed in his own thoughts, apparently very pleasant ones. He was recalling the events of the last few hours, and endeavouring to analyse his feelings. Light and buoyant had been his humour during his morning ramble, but certainly he was

happier now than then; yet he had suffered fearful anxiety for a short space, and deplored Alice Harcourt's present sufferings sincerely. Then how can this seeming inconsistency be explained? The woman whom he loved had been saved from severe injury, perhaps death, for this might probably have ensued, had she been dragged for any distance at the speed with which the frightened animal was proceeding; *his* had been the human arm which had saved her life—here was the main-spring of joy; and, secondly, even in her terror, *his* tones had not fallen strangely or unnoticed on her ear—and might he not indulge in the delightful hope that she was not ill pleased to find *him* to be her deliverer? For her most providential escape he must feel deep gratitude, and thus his happy sensation could again be sufficiently accounted for, as in the words of one who had been subjected to perils and dangers, storm and sunshine, “Yea, a joyful and pleasant thing it is to be thankful.”

CHAPTER XV.

" She sits a statue of despair,
In that far land, by that bright sea,
She knows it all, the hideous tale,
The wrong, the perjury, and the shame."

BULWER LYTTON.

THE following day, Herbert, notwithstanding his protestations that there was absolutely " nothing the matter," limped most perceptibly, and finally yielding to his sister's persuasions, consented to drive the pony-chaise over, instead of riding to Mr. Vernon's; the notion of walking there he did not himself entertain or suggest; this might have been solely attributable to the impatience which fans the wings of love; but Edith secretly believed he could only have hobbled there, a very ungraceful and unsuitable method of proceeding. She recommended, to avoid disap-

pointment, that he should not invade the territory before the luncheon hour, lest the invalid should not leave her room in the earlier part of the morning.

"I think I may start now," said he, "it is past twelve." This was a true remark, the clock certainly had just concluded its chimes, and at the same moment he was informed that Mr. Courtenay was waiting in the library, and had especially asked to see Mr. Howard.

"Odious man! most provoking, is it not, Edith? for the first time in my life I repent of taking your advice."

"Well, as you have followed it for nearly twenty years, I am not so much mortified at your observation as I ought, perhaps, to be," rejoined his sister; adding, "but I really am very sorry for you, perhaps your visitor will not detain you long. There, smooth your brow, and don't let Mr. Courtenay go away and libel his successor, as looking out of temper."

Herbert smiled, kissed his sister, and left the room, resolved to behave courteously, though wishing his acquaintance at the bottom of the sea, at least only if he could make himself comfortable there; in fact, anywhere but in the

library of Northwold Hall. After a few polite nothings, and remarks on the state of the weather and the harvest, Mr. Courtenay said—

“ I wished to know what day you propose to take possession of the Rectory, Mr. Howard.”

“ I beg you will suit your own convenience,” replied Herbert; “ as I remain my brother and sister’s guest for the next month or two, perhaps longer, it is a matter of perfect indifference to me.”

“ Then will it be agreeable to you to enter on your clerical duties the last Sunday of this month?” asked the visitor.

“ Quite so; having understood that you intended to conclude your ministrations here on the previous Sabbath, I am quite prepared to begin my work on the day you mention.”

Another half-hour passed in business arrangements, and at last Herbert was left at liberty to follow his inclinations. The little pony, in consequence of its mistress’s confinement to the house, had led an easy life during the last month, and was quite fresh and ready to second its present driver’s wishes for a speedy journey. To-day all favoured his desires, and he was immediately admitted to the drawing-room,

where he found Mrs. Vernon, but alone. In answer to his inquiries after her sister, she replied—

“Alice is much better, though her ankle is still swollen and painful; not wishing to be subjected to the fatigue of seeing all the visitors that call in the course of the afternoon, especially whilst the story of her accident is going the round of the neighbourhood, she has taken refuge in my boudoir, next the library;” and seeing a shade of disappointment on Herbert’s brow, she added, “but she makes an exception in your favour, and particularly wishes to see you.”

So saying, Mrs. Vernon led the way to the pretty sitting-room which claimed the privilege of belonging solely to the mistress of the house, a most liveable spot; books, work, and music, all bearing tokens of pleasing industry and of useful and agreeable pursuits; together with those many nameless little elegancies which belong peculiarly to the atmosphere of a lady’s room. A stand, placed in the recess of the window, was full of blossoming greenhouse plants; on the table, by the sofa, lay a basket full of choice flowers, geraniums, fuchsias, and roses, vying with each other in rich, gorgeous hues. The

occupant of the couch was employed in arranging them in an open Bohemian glass dish, with due regard to the blending of their bright colours, for now she could discover their forms and varied tints, even as others, and much did she delight in them.

“Alice, I have brought our kind friend, Mr. Howard, to pay you a visit,” said Janet.

The young girl’s blushing cheek betrayed her evident pleasure, as, extending her hand to Herbert, she said—

“I do not know how to express my thanks, Mr. Howard. I shall never forget the horror I experienced as I anticipated being dragged along the road ; and then the relief when I saw you at the horse’s head, and felt my foot disentangled. I remember no more ; for, foolish girl, just as I was saved I fainted, I believe.”

“It was a merciful escape, and I shall ever delight in the idea that I was allowed to render you any service, Miss Harcourt. I hope you will not be long a prisoner here. Edith is very anxious to have you at Northwold ;” and some one else was still more so, though he said it not.

“Were you hurt ? one of the servants thought

you walked lame, yesterday afternoon, on your second visit here," asked Alice, anxiously.

"Oh, nothing of any consequence; your pretty mare only trod on my foot; it is nothing worse than the discomfort of a tight boot, which many people wear, you know, for their own pleasure."

"I am afraid you are making light of it," replied Alice, whose now quick eye had caught sight of an uneasy movement of the foot in question, and perceived that the boot was not laced to, like the other.

"No; I assure you it is only a bruise, of which I am proud; had it been a broken limb it would have been a joyful sacrifice to your safety!" exclaimed the young man, with such fervour and earnestness that it again called the warm colour to Alice's cheek, and left Janet in no doubt of the sincerity of the young clergyman's attachment to her sister.

"I am so glad Edith has asked me to be her boy's godmother, and as you are one of his sponsors there will be no fear of the little fellow being neglected, should anything ever happen to his dear parents."

"You must still share the responsibility, Miss Harcourt, and I shall like to feel that Edith's

child is a bond of union between us," replied Herbert.

"There is one which I am reminded of every hour in the day," said Alice. "I never gaze on anything beautiful without remembering that to you, in a measure, I owe the happiness of being able to look upon it;" and then, as if fearful lest she had expressed her feelings too openly, she added, "I should be sadly ungrateful were it otherwise."

In pleasant converse the afternoon passed away, and Mr. and Mrs. Vernon asked their young friend to dine and stay the evening; the temptation was very strong, but the remembrance of his sister's words, "Do not be too late, for Colonel Cameron will be here to dinner;" determined him to deny himself the proffered pleasure, lest his absence should vex her, by a seeming disrespect to her husband's friend.

The Vernons understood and appreciated his motives, believing rightly, that a considerate brother would make an attentive and unselfish husband. He was not disappointed in the idea he had formed of Sir Edward Leslie's late brother-in-arms, and the two sponsors were mutually pleased with their introduction to

each other, and this impression strengthened day by day.

Colonel Cameron's history had been a sad and lonely one, as regards social ties. He had no near relations, but many friends, for he earned them by his upright and noble conduct; but whilst possessing all those qualities which especially fit for domestic happiness, such was not his portion, he had none "who loved him best."

He had given his heart and affections to one who, for a while, returned and seemed worthy of his love, but during a time of temptation she fell away; and when, after two years' absence abroad, he came home to claim his bride, he found her gone with one who blasted and betrayed her; a nobleman, who deceived her with the false mockery of a marriage by a Romish priest, professing himself of that creed to suit his base purposes. He took her abroad, and after a few months of thoughtless pleasure left her to return to wed his lawful wife, Eleanor Castleton, whose wealth suited his extravagance. If hatred to any human being ever found place in Robert Cameron's heart, it must have been for a brief space, when these tidings reached his ear. To shame the heartless wretch would be to pub-

lish her tale of weakness and of woe ; thus, for the sake of his victim, he was spared. The man whose very heart was torn and crushed by her faithlessness, sought her out in her misery, and brought her to her mother's home. There she died, broken hearted, from the base deceit that had been passed upon her ; but sorrowing most for the cruel scorn with which she had treated a noble heart, thus poisoning the very springs of her own and his happiness. She yearned for his pardon, which was given freely and fully, and he stood, with her mother, by her dying bed, to soothe the parting spirit with the hope of forgiveness, more needed still from the Heavenly Friend whose counsels she had so long slighted. Henceforth life was a blank to him, and he lived only in the joys or griefs of others, pursuing one long course of kindness and usefulness to his fellow-creatures.

Sir Edward Leslie was one of the few who had become acquainted with the sorrows of Colonel Cameron's early life, and even between the two friends it was a subject rarely touched upon. There are some wounds which never really heal, and such was this ; though he nourished no revenge, but had struggled till he could appeal to

the Searcher of hearts, to see that no unforgiving spirit still existed, though by patient and un murmuring resignation he had gained

" Their blessing, who by faith can wean
Their hearts from sense, and learn to love
God only and the joys above ;"

still, the pang of her broken faith and hapless lot was as fresh and keen as in the first period of his misery.

A few days after his arrival at Northwold Hall, during a walk in the village, they passed Glen Cottage, and Sir Edward mentioned his wish to have a quiet and respectable tenant for their former little home.

" If the terms are not too high, I fancy the place would suit a friend of mine," said Colonel Cameron.

" The rent will not be so much an object as ensuring a pleasant and comfortable neighbour," was the reply, " as I doubt not any one of your recommendation would prove."

" The person I have in my thoughts is Mrs. Campbell" (she was the mother of his lost love), " who is anxious to find a small residence in a retired village; for her grandson, poor Mary's child, having now entered the navy, she has no

longer any inducement to remain in a town, which she has hitherto done for the sake of his education."

"I am quite sure if Mrs. Campbell should desire to become our tenant, we shall be pleased to have it so, and to pay her every attention in our power, for your sake, dear Cameron," replied his friend.

"I do not think you would regret the arrangement, Leslie; Mrs. Campbell is a very quiet, gentle old lady, and her only remaining daughter a very worthy and excellent creature, though not personally attractive; indeed, she requires to be known to be valued—few people are prepossessed by her manner or appearance, but she would do anything to serve others."

"I have no doubt we should all get on very well together, for my Edith has the happy knack of always finding out everybody's good points, and shutting her eyes as much as possible to any defects—at all events, till after she has discovered sufficient excellence to counter-balance them," was the rejoinder.

"I can believe that delineation of your gentle wife's character to be very true, though traced by a not impartial hand; and although I have

only had the pleasure of her acquaintance for a few days, I judge Lady Leslie to be a blessing not to her husband only, but to all who come within the range of her influence. Mabel Campbell is able to appreciate her, for she can and does admire in others the grace and feminine softness wanting in herself, when not combined with weakness or feebleness of purpose," responded Colonel Cameron.

"I hope, by your account, that Miss Campbell will be a useful person in the parish; there is important work enough to do, and mischief to undo here for many hands, if pursued under good direction."

"To expend her energies amongst the poor, but always with the clergyman as her spiritual head, is the employment she covets. There was a period, before she rose from the blow that crushed her for a time, when, had Mabel Campbell been a Roman Catholic, she would have retired into the seclusion of a convent; now, were she of that faith, her vocation would be a Sister of Charity in a strict order."

"Herbert will, I doubt not, supply her with full occupation; he has often regretted the prejudice which exists against sisterhoods in the

Protestant Church, and believes them to be most useful instruments, if directed and controlled by proper and judicious authority; indeed, I have heard him express the opinion that many would be saved from Rome, if they had an organized field in which to expend their energies, within our own pure Church, and under the rule and teaching of her Scriptural ministers. But may I ask," continued Sir Edward Leslie, "how young Montague (I think he bears that name) promises to turn out?"

"Yes, he has always borne that name, being the one under which his poor mother was entrapped, and to which he has therefore a claim by courtesy, whilst it hides from the world his sad parentage."

"What is his age? nearly seventeen I should fancy," asked his friend.

"Yes, about that," replied Colonel Comeron. "He is a fine young fellow, and from all I can hear, well-disposed; personally I know very little of him, for I am ashamed to say I have purposely kept out of his way; when I last saw him, some years ago, his features resembled his unworthy father, so much more than those of his other parent, that his presence revived

feelings I wished to cast out. I have therefore endeavoured, in absence, to serve him, for poor Mary's sake, and succeeded in obtaining a naval cadetship this spring."

"The very fact of befriending him will create an interest in your kind heart towards him, Cameron; his looks are his misfortune, not his fault, and if he becomes an amiable and good man, the physical resemblance will not long hold, for it is the expression of Lord Castleton's otherwise handsome countenance which is so repulsive, bespeaking the effeminacy and unbridled passions of his mind."

"You are right; and a considerable period has elapsed since I looked on young Montague, during which time I trust my heart has been disciplined to more Christian feelings. I could meet him I believe differently now; and his aunt Mabel has left no stone unturned to form in him a character meet to baffle with the world, its snares and temptations, for she has striven to make her nephew a counterpart of herself in strength and decision of purpose."

No time was lost in communicating with Mrs. Campbell, and a kind invitation was added from the Leslies, to beg that she and her

daughter would pay them a visit the following month, during Colonel Cameron's stay, when they might at their leisure view Glen Cottage, and become acquainted with its neighbourhood. He urged their acceptance of the considerate offer, giving his assurance of its sincerity, and of the certainty of a pleasant reception by the amiable hostess.

CHAPTER XVI.

“ My light and my sun,
The threads of our two lives are woven in one ;
Then come the wild weather, come sleet or come snow,
We will stand by each other however it blow.”

LONGFELLOW.

THE time appointed for the christening of the heir of Northwold drew near, and Alice Harcourt removed to the Hall a few days previous to that event. Herbert had been most unremitting in his attentions to the fair invalid, and they certainly appeared to be by no means distasteful to the object of them. The evening after her arrival, he followed his sister to her room.

“ Edith, will you give me a few minutes before you summon your maid ? ”

“ Can my advice be of any service ? ” asked his brother-in-law, smiling, who, passing along the corridor, had overheard his petition.

"No, thank you, Edward, not in the least ; I only want Edith," replied Herbert.

"She has not had so much experience as myself, I assure you ; I know much more of such matters," persisted Sir Edward, with a merry face.

"You know nothing about my ailment, so can prescribe no proper remedies," answered the young man.

"Oh, don't I? perhaps you are mistaken ; but wilful man, like wilful woman, must even have his way, I suppose, so good night."

"Well, Herbert," said his sister, when they were alone, "have you proposed and been rejected, or what is the matter?"

"Oh, do not speak thus quietly, Edith, on a subject in which my happiness for life is involved."

"And which, therefore, cannot fail to influence mine, dearest Herbert ; had I really any such apprehension as I jokingly named, it would not have been thus lightly spoken of, you may rest assured."

"Then you augur success ; you think she is not ignorant nor averse to my affection?"

"The she by whom I presume you designate Alice has never confided to me her opinion re-

garding our future rector," replied Edith; "but as far as my penetration will assist me, I believe that she smiles on your suit."

"Then I may write and ask Mr. Harcourt's permission to address her? That is the point on which I want your counsel, Edie dear."

"And my dictum is, do so by all means, and as soon as you like, Herbert; I prophesy you will receive no disagreeable answer to your request, which I confidently hope will be a foreshadowing of the more important sentence to be pronounced upon your fate."

"When do you think I shall receive a reply from Langley?"

"That must depend on the day you post your letter, sir," said his sister, playing with the nut brown curls that covered his temples.

"Of course I shall send it to-morrow, probably ride over to the town in time for the early mail, before breakfast."

"Very well, then probably you may hear from the father of your beloved the day after to-morrow, but that is Sunday; and, as our bag will not be delivered, you must exercise the virtue of patience till Monday. One benefit I foresee arising from this delay, namely, that your god-

son will have a better chance of obtaining some consideration from you."

"Oh! he will not be forgotten, though I believe you are right, for on my first Sabbath amongst my people I ought not to have a divided heart; but I will not keep you longer from your rest; many thanks for your pleasant encouragement."

As may be supposed, the supplicatory epistle was duly penned ere the lover thought of such a sublunary thing as sleep; and early next morning he was in the saddle, and on his way to the neighbouring town.

At breakfast, Sir Edward Leslie rallied him unmercifully on his early ride, and Alice wondered what could have been the cause of it. Anxious to change so embarrassing a subject, the young rector remarked to his sister—"Edith, I think I have expressed your own and Edward's feelings respecting baby's christening. I find that it is a matter of wonder to the farmers and bettermost class, that he is to be baptised on a Sunday, and during the service; and the cottagers fancy they ought not to bring any of their little ones on the same occasion."

"What an odd idea!" they both remarked; "and how did you reply?"

"I told them," continued Herbert, "that I believed you had selected the last Lord's Day in the month because it was the appointed christening Sunday, and that I was sure the greater number of the villagers' children that were taken to the font in company with the child whom you hoped might dwell amongst them, the better you would be pleased."

"Thank you, Herbert, for saying exactly what I should have desired to express had I been acquainted with the prevailing impression," replied the father. "I indeed wish that our little Herbert Cameron should be identified with their interests and best feelings."

The attendance at a country church is always better in the afternoon than in the morning, partly because the poor man's wife generally remains at home to cook the hot Sunday dinner, and there is always a preponderance of female worshippers; and also, because too many of the labourers saunter away the early part of the day in their garden, smoking their pipes.

"A new broom sweeps clean," is the old saying,

and many were attracted to see and hear "the new parson." The young master's christening was also another inducement, so the church was much fuller than it had been for many a year. Mr. Walton had preached in the morning, and Herbert first addressed his parishioners after the second service. He claimed their attention by his earnestness, while he brought before them their respective responsibilities and mutual relation as pastor and flock, urging on them obedience to him as their divinely-appointed teacher, that he might give account of them "with joy and not with grief." But we must not overlook the holy rite and reception into the Ark of Christ's Church of the several infants then brought to receive the Saviour's blessing.

As the venerable Mr. Walton thus admitted them into the covenant of baptism, the earnest prayers of at least a few were offered that they might lead the rest of their lives according to this beginning ; and Edith clasped her boy to her heart, feeling that the holy sacramental dew had hallowed and increased tenfold the value of her treasure. As Herbert, for the first time, pronounced the benediction, fervently did he pray that the peace which passeth all understanding

might fill the hearts of minister and people ; and that thus his mission amongst them might be blessed in time and in eternity.

“When shall you look at your new home, Herbert ? I mean go over the house and grounds,” asked Edith, that evening.

“Any time, to-morrow if you like ; we must visit it in full force. Remember, I engage the attendance of all the company in the morning if the weather prove fine.”

“I am sure Alice neither can nor ought to walk to the Rectory, so you shall drive her and myself in the pony-chaise.”

The next day with what impatience was the postman's arrival waited for by one inmate of Northwold Hall. Breakfast was in progress of discussion when the letter-bag was brought into the dining-room by the servant, and after leisurely finding the key and unlocking the valuable receptacle, the master of the house distributed to each their due, saying—as Herbert received his coveted possession, yet sitting by Alice not having courage to open it placed it in his pocket—

“I hope all the budget is not as uninteresting as yours appears to be, Howard, judging by the

quiet way in which you have postponed its perusal; everything in its right time is your maxim, I suppose. Can I help you to some more ham, as a more suitable occupation of the present hour?"

Herbert laughed, and parried the observation; but the social meal being nearly concluded, he soon after left the room. Then rushing out through the conservatory to the shrubbery, where he calculated on reading the momentous document undisturbed, he tore the cover away which hid it from his sight. Alas! unlucky swain, the envelope contained a civil order for a new scientific work, and in all probability the reply to his earnest appeal had travelled to the bookseller in Paternoster Row! Miserable man! could he not divest himself of his geological mania for once, and on such an important occasion. The absurdity of the affair almost triumphed over the vexation and disappointment, but yet he looked very woe-begone when Edith met him still sauntering in the pleasure grounds.

"What is the matter?" asked she; "surely you have had no stern repulse?"

"The provoking old bookworm!"

"Highly respectful language towards an anticipatory father-in-law," interposed Edith.

"Well, he deserves it; will you believe that this is all the reply I get—an order for some folio on Organic Remains; and what is worse, his reflections on my love and admiration for his daughter will find their way to some publisher's clerk."

"And doubtless afford them no small amusement," suggested his sister, in what seemed to Herbert rather an unsympathising tone. "How soon shall you be ready to drive Alice and me to the Rectory?" continued she. "We are all ready, and at your commands, whenever you please."

"Oh, any time. My pleasure for the day is gone—I don't care when."

"Oh! beware, sir; don't care was eaten up by a lion. Don't you remember the terrible picture in your early lesson book?" said Edith, in a serio-comic manner.

"Really, I can't understand you. Something must have excited your mirth very much, to make you so unfeeling, so totally wanting in pity for me," was the reply.

"Surely the recital of your own *contre-temps*

is sufficiently entertaining to account for it, with my keen sense of the ludicrous; but if you will come into this side walk, for I see they are all in the conservatory, and will soon be out here, I will condescend to give you a further explanation. Do you think I am generally disposed to find amusement in your discomfiture, Herbert?"

"Certainly not, my dear sister, but you are rather in a teasing mood this morning, I must say."

"I confess it, and that is the first step towards amendment, at least so I was taught when I was a little girl; and now, as you have borne with very tolerable patience my provoking naughtiness, you shall have a most satisfactory solution of the problem. After the uninteresting document was posted, which you received, Mrs. Harcourt, coming into her husband's study, saw the intended answer to your request, still lying on the table, and showing it to him, he discovered the mistake he must have made, as the envelope near the letter was addressed not to you, but to 'William Brown, Old Street, St. Luke's.' With a woman's sympathy in your probable disappointment, she wrote to

mé the history, inclosing this," handing a note to Herbert, "which she tells me contains a full and gracious consent. A special messenger carried it to the town, the time being past for posting it in the village that evening."

He no sooner read the pleasant contents, than with a beaming look of happiness, he now declared himself ready, and impatient for the proposed excursion to the rectory grounds. A short drive brought them to the door of the pretty little parsonage, the gentlemen, who had taken a short cut across the fields, arriving nearly at the same moment. It was a gabled house of moderate dimensions, tastefully built in a rather ornamental style. Autumn roses still blossomed round the windows. A pretty lawn lay to the south, studded with flower-beds full of verbenas, geraniums, phloxes, and fuschias, yet uninjured by the frosts. A small greenhouse opening into the drawing-room, was also gay with plants in full bloom, Herbert having agreed to take all such articles off Mr. Courtenay's hands; the furniture that gentleman had removed to his new living. The rooms wore, therefore, that empty and rather dreary appearance, which is always pro-

duced more or less by an unfurnished house. Faded papers, walls knocked about, and paint rubbed off with the late packing.

"I wonder if, by cutting down a tree or two, I could catch a view of the Hall," said Herbert.

"Yes, I think it would be practicable. This fir-tree could come down, without any great loss, and would effect your purpose," rejoined Sir Edward.

"It is a pity you have no room with that aspect," observed Colonel Cameron. "Had you a north window in this, in which we now are, you could command a fine look-out over those hills, besides watching the movements of Lady Leslie in her flower garden."

"Could it be done without much difficulty or expense, Edward? you know more about bricks and mortar than myself. If so, I should certainly like to have it managed."

"I see no obstacle, and the improvement to the room would be manifest. At present, it is decidedly rather too dark."

"A bow-window would be prettiest, like that on the south side of the house. Do you not think so, Miss Harcourt?" asked Herbert.

"Yes, perhaps so, I always like the cheerful

recess of one ; but gentlemen profess not to care about looking out, and such matters."

The rest of the company at this time were passing into the garden, through the open glass door of the apartment, and Alice was about to follow, when Herbert, lingering behind under pretext of discussing the proposed alteration, poured out his tale of love, assuring her that he had her parents' permission to plead his cause.

"Oh ! Alice, dearest, say you will be mine, and be the sunshine of my life, and the mistress of my little parsonage."

He took her hand, she did not strive to loose it from his grasp.

*"Her hand lay trembling on his arm,
Averted glowed the happy face ;
By silence love is answered best,
Her answer was the downcast eye."*

The moments fled by as he led her through the quiet shrubberies, till she said, "Herbert," and as for the first time she called him by that name, it summoned the blood to her cheek, but sent a thrill of pleasure through his heart.

"Herbert, Edith will wonder what has become of us, should we not seek her now?" and

in a turn of one of the winding walks they soon after met her.

"I had lost you," she exclaimed; then seeing that Alice's arm rested on her brother, who clasped the little fair hand in his, she added, "but I guess your time has been agreeably and well spent."

"Yes, Edith, Alice is our own now. Langley must be content to yield its fairest flower to be transplanted to Northwold Rectory."

A hearty sisterly embrace to Alice was the first reply to this pleasing intelligence. "It will be so delightful to have you so near; a wife is all that Herbert wants to complete his happiness, and I must thank him for giving me the sister I would have chosen, had the selection been left in my own hands."

This was a happy day, and made ample amends for the disappointment of the morning, which now only afforded much amusement to all concerned. Alice's sisters at home claimed, as a fair right, that she should return to Langley before Christmas, and remain with them till her marriage, which was fixed to take place in the following summer, as the repairs and painting at the parsonage could not be attempted till spring.

A free invitation was given by Mr. and Mrs. Harcourt to Herbert, to be a visitor there as often as parish duties would permit of his absence, which, in a degree, reconciled him to the approaching separation. Many were the schemes discussed together by the happy circle for the benefit of his new parishioners; and Alice, by accompanying Edith, and assisting in her kind labours for the poor, became familiarised to them as the future wife of their young pastor.

CHAPTER XVII.

"The poor have hands, and feet, and eyes,
Flesh, and a feeling mind;
They breathe the breath of mortal sighs,
They are of human kind."

HAWKER.

ONE evening, on his return from a long day's work in the parish, Herbert said—

"What is to be done, Edward, with the guardians, they are most impracticable men? I have wasted several hours to-day in trying to move the stony heart of that important functionary of Northwold."

"Let me hear your case before I can give any opinion upon its merits."

"You know that Alice and Edith came home on Tuesday, with a sad and pitiable story of an old couple living in Bird Lane, and asked me to get their parish relief increased. Before making any application I resolved to investigate the matter

myself, not that I doubted the accuracy of their narrative, but because I thought it possible the worst might have been made of it to move their tender hearts, and it is necessary to stick only to stern facts with these hard-headed men of business. So I walked to the cottage, or rather hut, as it should be called, and found the tenants at home. The inside was more wretched than the external appearance had denoted; there are but two small rooms, a bed-room and kitchen, in both of which the rain pours through the roof; the broken panes in the casement stuffed with paper or rag. On inquiring, I find it belongs to the parish, which charges eighteen-pence a week rent for this miserable abode. Not a penny has been expended on repairs for very many years. Old Wilkins has been for the last twelve months unable to do a day's work, and by his feeble and crippled appearance never will again I should fear. His wife, always a poor creature, is often so incapacitated by 'rheumatics,' as she calls it, as to be unable to earn anything for weeks together; yet, because having a good heart for it she now and then gets a shilling by washing or charring, she is not deemed a fit object for full relief, and the pittance the old folks have to

exist upon—it is not *living*—is one shilling a week and two gallons of flour ; how is the rent alone to be paid, leaving fuel, clothing, or other necessaries out of the question altogether? From all I hear this is not a solitary case. In vain I used every argument—the only answer I could obtain from that hard-hearted fellow Jones was, that the Union was open to the Wilkins, so that it was their own fault if they preferred starving. I represented that instead of pauperising them, why not allow them at least what their maintenance in the house must cost, as there they must be driven, by necessity, to the expense of the parish ; but he shook his head, and said he was not afraid of an influx there. And except in cases of extreme idleness he is right no doubt, for the breaking up of home, wretched as it may seem, and the parting with the few bits of furniture, some of it perhaps their parents' before it belonged to them, or memorials of the carefully-saved hoardings when young, with which to dress the first married home ; all this is not done without a bitter pang, nor till pushed to the verge of utter misery and want. Old Wilkins said, when his wife mentioned the Union as their probable end, ' Oh, please God to take me first ; to go into the house of bondage in my old age is

what I cannot bear to think of. I would spend the remaining days of my life with her whom I married a loving lass, fifty-three years ago, come next Lady tide.' ”

“Yes,” said Edith, “I think that is such a cruel law to part the poor old creatures during the last few short years of their existence. Unions should be for idle, or at least younger, paupers, and other refuges be found for the deserving and industrious poor, when the palsy of age and sickness has fallen upon them.”

“Do you know some lines on that subject, by a clergyman, a Mr. Hawker, I think?—your remark, Edith, reminded me so exactly of them,” said Alice.

“No, I do not remember what you allude to ; can you repeat them?”

“‘The poor men have their wedding day,
And children climb their knee ;
They have not many friends, for they
Are in such misery.
They sell their youth, their skill, their pains,
For hire in hill and glen ;
The very blood within their veins,
It flows for other men.

“‘They should have roofs to call their own,
When they grow old and bent ;
Meek houses built of dark gray stone,
Worn labour's monument.

There should they dwell beneath the thatch,
With threshold calm and free ;
No stranger's hand should lift the latch,
To mark their poverty.

“ ‘Fast by the church those walls should stand,
Her aisles in youth they trod ;
They have no home in all the land,
Like that old House of God.
There, there, the sacrament was shed,
That gave them heavenly birth ;
And lifted up the poor man's head,
With princes of the earth.’ ”

“ They are very beautiful—where did you find them, Alice dear ? ” asked Herbert.

“ In a small volume called ‘ Days and Seasons ; or, Church Poetry for the Year.’ Annie had the book lent to her last winter, and read them to me till I learnt them by heart. I have only repeated three, but there are a great many more verses. I will endeavour to get a copy for you, Herbert.”

“ Thank you, dearest. Is the whole poem on the subject of almshouses ? ”

“ Chiefly so, drawing a comparison between them and the vaunted comforts of the Union. Alluding to the absence of the sweet sounds of church bells, to bid the inmates to their Sabbath worship, it continues—

“ And when they vaunt that in these walls
They have their worship day,
Where the stern signal coldly calls
The *prisoned* poor to pray,
I think upon that ancient home,
Beside the churchyard wall,
Where roses round the porch would roam,
And gentle jasmines fall ! ”

When Alice concluded, Edith exclaimed—

“ Such a happy thought has come into my head ! I must tell you all and hear the judgment of our little public. I mentioned to Edward your determination, Herbert, to resign the little nest egg I had made over to you when I married, and now I know how we can employ it—in building almshouses for Northwold.”

“ A most delightful plan,” observed her husband ; “ and a pleasant feeling it will be to devote the money to God and his poor, which was such a prop to both yourself and Herbert in your time of need.”

“ It was the legacy of one dear brother ; and having benefited, and being again placed in my hands by my other brother, makes it, in a manner, a family thanksgiving offering,” said Edith.

“ It will relieve all my difficulty, and make me independent of the hard-hearted Mr. Jones,”

SHINING AFTER RAIN;

There should they dwell beneath the thatch,
 With threshold calm and free;
 No stranger's hand should lift the latch,
 To mark their poverty.

"Fast by the church those walls should stand,
 Her gates if youth they trod;
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"And when they vaunt that in these walls
They have their worship day,
Where the stern signal coldly calls
The *prisoned* poor to pray,
I think upon that ancient home,
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of need."

"It was the legacy of one dear brother; and
having benefited, and being again ph- my
brother, makes
giving offering
I my diffic
hard-her
nes."

rejoined Herbert. "Where would you erect the building?"

"'Fast by the church those walls should stand,' in the words of Alice's favourite lines," she replied.

"There is a sheltered field open to the south, adjoining the churchyard, and in which I will present you with as much ground as you please, Edith," said Sir Edward.

"Thanks; that is the very spot, for old people are apt to be chilly. I should like to have gardens, both useful and ornamental; potatoes for winter store, and flowers in summer, to brighten the prospect from the windows, which they may call their own."

"A little fir plantation on the north side would keep the cold blast away. I suppose it is not too late to plant it this autumn," remarked Herbert.

"Oh, no; let us all go to-morrow and select the exact situation," replied his brother-in-law, who entered as warmly as himself into the proposed scheme; "then Edith and Alice may put their wise heads together, and draw out a plan of the grounds, gardens, and flower plots; and

last, though not least, of the almshouses themselves."

"It will be a pleasant occupation," responded Alice; "but the architectural part will be quite beyond me. How many dwellings do you contemplate building, Edith?"

"I really don't know how many may be erected at the cost of £600, but I should like each to possess two rooms, sleeping and living apartments, besides a little pantry; with a wash-house and oven to each pair. The entrance might serve two sets, I fancy, and make the houses warmer than a larger number of doors."

"Especially," suggested Alice, "if you build them with porches."

"With garlands overgrown, and a seat on either side for the old people to rest themselves on and bask on the sunny days."

"I fancy six sets might well be built for that sum, giving scope for taste and ornament besides; but beyond preparing the ground nothing, I fear, can be done till spring; the same obstacle of weather militating equally against almshouses as parsonages, and we know that no avoidable delay would be incurred in the latter case," said Sir Edward Leslie, smilingly, as he eyed Herbert

and Alice, who sat side by side. "By the by," he added, "when are you going to call upon Mrs. and Miss Campbell, they have been located here nearly a week?"

"I wrote to the old lady offering every assistance," replied Edith, "but Alice and I thought it would be kinder to let them settle down comfortably before we intruded upon them."

"Quite right, I have no doubt; I don't pretend to understand such affairs as ladies do, only I shall be happy to call when you think the due time is arrived."

"Then, perhaps, we could pay a visit to Glen Cottage on our way home from the inspection of the ground for our 'Almshouses,' to-morrow," continued Edith. "I was much pleased with Miss Campbell when she was here, though in those two days they spent with us I had not great opportunities of forming an accurate opinion of her character."

"The old lady appeared very kind and gentle, and evidently had a deep reverence and admiration for her daughter and all her opinions," observed Alice.

"Yet this engendered no want of respect in Miss Campbell, that I could remark; on the

contrary, she appeared to treat her mother with a respectful tenderness, a mixture of honour and love so beautiful to behold," added Herbert, "and which softened for the time her otherwise rather abrupt manners."

The following morning the sun shone with the brightness of a clear frosty December day, and, warmly equipped, the quartet started for their walk. The robin was singing blithely in the hedge, and the holly berries enlivened the dark green bushes.

"When these pretty buildings are erected they will shame the dingy-looking old church, with its extinguisher and many shaped windows. I shall be ambitious of a new and worthier edifice in its place," said Herbert.

"If the congregation continues to increase as it has done during the last two months, it will not be long ere you may claim Lord Westfield's promise to give his share towards the rearing of a larger and nobler temple in which to worship the Lord of rich and poor," replied his sister.

The spot was now reached, and after mature consideration and much discussion, the warmest and most sheltered nook selected, and the place

for a plantation finally decided, which was to be commenced without delay.

“Do you think we shall find water near at hand?” asked Sir Edward, of a gray-headed labourer who had worked on the land all his life.

“Hard by, I reckon,” was the reply; “there is a spring which rises behind us, about fifty yards from where we stand.”

“This is good hearing, and I think we can progress no further to-day, and shall only catch cold if we stand about any longer; the plan must be the next part of the business, so I vote that we now pay our respects to the present inhabitants of Glen Cottage.”

Mrs. Campbell and her daughter were at home, and received their new acquaintances with much friendly cordiality; nor would the kind little old lady be satisfied till they accepted her pressing invitation to take some home-made cake and wine; putting a fresh log on the fire, and insisting on Alice warming herself thoroughly before it.

Their morning occupation formed a topic of conversation; and finding, from the many skillfully executed drawings and paintings now de-

corating the walls of the little sitting-room, that Mabel Campbell was an artist of no mean order, Edith asked her assistance in designing an elevation for the proposed "Almshouses."

"I am sure Mabel has a beautiful drawing of the kind you mention," said Mrs. Campbell. "I remember I was told how well several copies sold at a bazaar, some years ago—it was a very grand affair, I heard, in aid of a hospital."

"It is in my portfolio upstairs, I think," observed her daughter, "and it may afford some hints, perhaps, but is not suited precisely to Lady Leslie's purpose. I will fetch it, and I need not say that my pencil is at your command for anything to result in the benefit of the people amongst whom we are come to dwell, for I rely on Mr. Howard's promise to give me full and active employment."

Miss Campbell soon returned with the coloured chalk drawing, which embraced several of the points desired, but was not wholly suitable, as it represented a two-storied building, and it had been finally resolved, in conclave, that the Northwold cottage-homes should be on the ground-floor, to save the difficulty of mounting stairs to aged and crippled inmates. After

much animated discussion, Mabel Campbell engaged to sketch an ornamental design, and bring it, when completed, to the Hall for approval.

This proved a fruitful subject for the interchange of morning visits ; and the more the two families saw of each other's ways and doings, the greater was the mutual satisfaction at the present tenancy of Glen Cottage.

The departure of Alice, which could be no longer deferred, caused a blank to all. Herbert, after accompanying and delivering her up safely to her parents, spent a few days happily at Langley Park ; and looking forward to summer, which, like all other seasons, must arrive in due time, returned home to his parish and work, now sweetened with the thought of the loving and gentle one who had so lately taken her part, and would, he hoped, again, ere long, share and help him onward in his path of duty with all a woman's tender influence.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"The thickly woven boughs they wreath
Through every hallowed fane."

CROSSWELL.

CHRISTMAS came, and with it many happy fire-sides, cheered and warmed by the kindness of their richer neighbours. Each labourer on the Northwold estate had his piece of beef and loaf of bread, nor was plum-pudding and home-brewed beer forgotten, for the Leslie's loved to keep up all the unobjectionable customs of olden time, and thought, with the poet—

"'Twas Christmas broached the mightiest ale;
'Twas Christmas told the merriest tale;
A Christmas gambol oft could cheer
The poor man's heart through half the year."

Edith, with Mabel Campbell's tasteful help, spent many hours in wreathing the windows in

the church, and otherwise decorating it with holly and evergreens. The latter was anxious to place some ecclesiastical designs and beautifully executed crosses in different parts of the sacred edifice ; but though very sorry to disappoint her after so much time and trouble had been expended on them, Herbert wisely declined them.

“ I much regret, Miss Campbell,” said he, “ that through my own thoughtlessness I have wasted so much of your time and handiwork ; of course I ought to have mentioned, at first, my intention of excluding all that could give offence as a badge of party.”

“ I candidly admit a feeling of chagrin, perhaps nearer bordering on annoyance than is right, Mr. Howard, for the clergyman is no doubt the proper person to decide such matters ; but I have been used to so much exquisite symbolical decoration at the different seasons of the principal festivals of the church, and am fond of the employment.”

“ None would, personally, find greater pleasure in permitting and beholding it here than myself,” replied the young clergyman ; “ but as my parish is constituted, I feel bound to be scrupulously

careful not to give offence to the weak and wavering; the main body of my people are, or were, Dissenters, when I came, as you are aware. I have much cause for thankfulness, in the pleasing fact, that the church is filling rapidly, whilst the chapel is thinning in proportion; but with the unfortunate vicinity of a Roman Catholic place of worship, you will, I am sure, see the danger I shall run of again losing my flock, if they see, or fancy they can perceive, too near an approach even to the outward customs practised at the Popish chapel."

"I dare say you are acting judiciously, Mr. Howard, but I cannot bear to seem to yield so many lovely things, as though the erring church of Rome alone had claim to them. I am sure you do not sympathise with the jealous horror exhibited by many for the Cross."

"No, indeed; let the Papist appropriate to himself and his creed the crucifix, but never would I part with the most blessed symbol of our pure, holy, and truly Catholic faith; and I hope the day may come in Northwold when it will be gloried in as the true banner for all faithful children of our Protestant Church of

England to rally round, and then it may be admitted, without offence, into our Christmas decorations."

"I must follow your example of patience and trust, and hope your tenderness in bearing with their weaknesses will meet its due reward in future times ; you have the blessed gift of that

" ' gentle spirit,
Which marks the faithful few,'

in which I feel I am sadly wanting ; for extreme party spirit always rouses within me one of defiance, and I feel inclined to make people at such times believe me still more high church than I really am. I well remember my indignation, many years ago, when an elderly maiden lady was looking at some sketches in my portfolio, and remarked in a tone of horror, regarding a poor, little, humble, and very unarchitectural village church—' Is that a cross on the steeple ? I hope not.' I felt half inclined to laugh, but replied, ' No, madam, unfortunately not, it is only a weathercock, but I hold the cross to be the birthright of every Christian, his glory, and his triumph.' As may be supposed, I was looked upon henceforth as half-way to Rome,

and avoided as a person who had the plague, whereas no one is more truly opposed than myself, to that faith, exalting as it does, human traditions, and worst of all, robbing man of the fundamental doctrines of salvation, placing in his hand a broken reed, instead of the only staff which can afford true comfort and support."

"I understand exactly what you mean," replied the rector; "I am sensible of having felt the same inclination, sometimes on one, and sometimes on the other side of the question; it partly arises from the natural perversity and contradiction of our natures, but also it teaches us, by our own experience, the necessity of moderation, for violence and party spirit will only mar our usefulness, by raising factious opposition, instead of winning souls to Christ."

"Thank you, Mr. Howard, for this conversation; it has smoothed my vexation, and reconciled me to carrying home again my ornamental designs, where they shall adorn my own room, giving me pleasure, and creating no offence to any one."

"We shall meet for another chat I hope, tomorrow, as my sister tells me that you and Mrs.

Campbell have promised to eat your Christmas dinner at the Hall, and I want to discuss in full conclave the subject of the school."

Thus amicably, and even cordially, parted Herbert from his energetic parishioner, whom he found a most useful coadjutor ; her zeal at times outstripped discretion, but she was amenable to reason, and submitted with a good grace to him as her spiritual pastor and master, which prevented any injurious results.

On Christmas day, the country was clad in white, a heavy fall of snow having taken place during the previous night ; but the sun shone forth, giving a silver hue to the frosted blades of grass, and adding much beauty to the heavily-laden branches of the trees. Hid were the bushes, save here and there the prickly bunch of holly reared its head, crowned with its coral gems. Smooth were the fields, each little hollow deceitfully level with the plain. How dazzling bright was the snowy scene ! from many a twig, hung the pendant drops of ice, most beautiful in form, mocking the crystal shapes of man's devising. The sky was clear and blue, and the beauty of the winter's day triumphed over the cold and less agreeable accompaniments of the walk through the deep

lanes, in which the snow had drifted considerably in many places ; and thus Northwold Church held within its walls a much larger assemblage of worshippers than in former years ; and the service over, contrary to his usual custom on Sundays, when he always remained in his vestry till all were dispersed, Herbert mixed with his flock to shake hands, and exchange the hearty good wishes of the holy and happy season—which erst

“To the cottage, as the crown,
Brought tidings of salvation down.”

That evening, as round the blazing logs sat the party at the Hall, one only absent friend was wanted to complete the happy circle—Alice, who at Langley Park felt also one solitary blank in their family group, but she hoped it would be the last and only Christmas she and Herbert would spend apart, and knew he could not rightly leave his post at that time, even for her dear sake.

“Mr. Howard,” said Mabel Campbell, “what is the subject of the school consultation you mentioned yesterday?”

“It is no less than to lay before you all my ideas respecting a change of instructors—the well-

meaning dame is quite inadequate to her important situation; on that point I imagine we shall all agree." A unanimous assent being given, he proceeded—"I was anxious not to make an enemy of her, or to incur the odium sudden and sweeping changes are sure to invoke, and therefore have waited till now, that we might seal our present good understanding with a pleasant and friendly Christmas. Her husband, a day labourer, is an earnest-minded man, and with some education, sufficient to make him a very useful assistant to me in our adult night school; indeed, even with Edward's kind aid, now that our numbers have so much increased, I don't know what I should have done during the last two months, without the honest fellow's ready and willing help. This is an additional reason for dealing gently with his wife's feelings, and a few days ago an opening occurred, of which I propose to take advantage. On entering the school, I found her half in anger, half in tears, at the turbulence of the great boys, declaring that they were beyond any woman's management, in which I agreed, and promised to consider of some plan for relieving her of this trouble."

"How fortunate it is that you had the patience

to wait, and do nothing rashly," observed his sister, "as the opportunity has now presented itself for promoting your own wishes. And what arrangement do you propose?"

"To make her a sort of Infant Schoolmistress to the two youngest classes, whom she can teach in her sitting-room during the morning, and to have all the girls there in the afternoon, to learn needlework under her instructions, both of which tasks I believe her quite competent to undertake," replied Herbert.

"And how shall you dispose of the elder portion of the little community?" inquired his brother-in-law; "to the first part of your scheme, as one of the trustees of the school, I give my full concurrence, and it appears to meet with the approval of the whole council."

"Yes, I think it is an admirable idea," said Mabel Campbell; "in my rough way of going to work, seeing the need of a better mistress, I fear I should have only thought of finding a more able substitute, and when found, should have dismissed poor Mrs. Martin."

"And now for the remainder of your plan," said Edith; "I dare say it is equally good, but let us hear it, please."

“ When visiting one of the farmers the other day, Mr. Copeland, who has long attended the Chapel, and who now divides his time between it and the Church, I inquired the number of his family, and a few other particulars, as it is impossible to gain an influence over people without showing some real interest in them, and that cannot be felt without first obtaining a certain degree of knowledge of their various circumstances. I learnt all sorts of information about Tom, and Jack, and Sally, and heard that one son was from home, being trained at a diocesan college, for a schoolmaster’s career, and was now in want of a berth. I wrote to the superintendent, to ask his opinion of Mr. George Copeland’s character and capabilities, and have received a very favourable and satisfactory answer. I therefore propose to offer the mastership to him, with a lodging in the schoolhouse, and I fancy the sum he may pay Mrs. Martin for acting housekeeper, and ‘doing for him,’ as the term is, will compensate for the reduction in her salary. His will, of course, be an extra expense, but the flourishing state of the subscriptions and funds of the school will prevent that falling at all heavily upon me, and I hope, by this arrangement, to weigh down the

wavering balance in favour of the Church, in future, with Mr. Copeland senior, and his family."

"You could not have better devised, had you schemed and contrived for a year," responded Sir Edward; "and remember, that if you find the Bank empty sooner than you expect, from this alteration, you must come to me to supply the deficiency."

"Thank you, you are an unfailing resource, but I hope not to be obliged to draw so largely on your generosity."

"Does Mr. Copeland know of your intentions towards his son?" asked Edith.

"No; I mean to call on him, and announce them to-morrow morning, and then post my letter to the future pedagogue; with all Edward's kindness, besides the fact of his holding some authority as trustee, I could not conclude the business without first consulting him on such an important step."

"Union is strength," remarked Mabel Campbell; "it is truly a blessing, when rector and squire can and will work together, and great must be the benefits resulting to the parish where thus it is. Formerly, here, Lady Leslie tells me,

the clergyman's indolence marred the landowner's exertions, and I have known more than one case the other way, where the pastor has seemed to labour in vain, owing to the want of co-operation, nay, sometimes the positive counteraction of those in whose hands power, because wealth, lay; then the duty of perseverance and unflagging energy is hard, and the seed can only be sown in faith of the harvest arriving in due time, though perhaps for another to reap its fruits; but even then, as Keble says

"In disappointment (God) can bless,
So love at heart prevail."

"Yes; such are the trials and clouds of many a labourer in the Master's vineyard," replied Herbert, "and I have great cause for thankful rejoicing that my lot is cast in such pleasant and fair ground. I have found it very far different from what I was led to expect from the character Mr. Courtenay gave the people, on my brother's first arrival amongst them. I have certainly had no cause to complain of the want of courtesy he mentioned."

"Probably because they have met with and

experienced it themselves at your hands, and, from what I hear in the cottages, he was, or had the credit of being, a very proud man, and never attempted to use conciliatory means, in his intercourse with his parishioners."

CHAPTER XIX.

"There's tempest in yon hornéd moon,
There's lightning in yon cloud."

ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

WINTER passed away and the days began to lengthen, and still the rector of Northwold found full employment. His night-school season was drawing to a close, the cottage gardens requiring the evening for their cultivation; and to promote such useful and profitable labours he united with two or three other villages in forming an association for the improvement of village horticulture, in which prizes were to be given for the best kept gardens and the finest vegetables and fruits. This gave a great stimulus to the cottagers, and the squire and rector hoped many young men might, during the ensuing summer

months, be thus deterred from spending their evenings in playing skittles at the public-house. But the closing of the adult school did not give Herbert much more leisure, as he still endeavoured to collect his former pupils and others, by means of a weekly cottage lecture, at various parts of the parish, saying, that if he could once gather them to listen to him, he did not despair of afterwards bringing them within the church's walls. "If they will not come to me, I must go to them, and not leave them to be discoured to by the Dissenters," he would remark.

"I shall shock you, Miss Campbell," said he one day, "but it is no less true, that if I could not gain a hearing elsewhere, I would go out into the highways and preach there."

"I know the custom has now episcopal sanction and example," she replied, "and may effect good when nothing else will. I am not quite as narrow-minded in my views as when I came to Northwold, six months ago."

"Well, I can now tell you something which will please all present, but especially you—can you guess?"

"No, indeed; but I think Lady Leslie has some idea about it."

“Are you going to establish the daily evening prayers?” asked Edith, joyfully.

“Yes; I think I may now do so without fear of being misunderstood, or deemed a Tractarian. I have felt my way carefully, and find many would be glad of the opportunity of hearing thus the Bible read, which so few can peruse for themselves, owing to the want of a good school for the last generation. In passing the chapel, I have seen many faces going in there of a weekday evening, who are Sunday church-goers, and if the Dissenting minister gives them one, if not more opportunities, of meeting for prayer, in the course of the six working days, why may I not open the church to give my people purer instruction and a worthier form of worship? I have the promise of several labourers to come, in their way home from work, to refresh their souls, and return thanks for the mercy that preserves them from the many dangers which surround them in the day’s toil, so I propose to commence next Monday.”

“What hour have you determined on?” inquired his brother-in-law. “I shall hope to be seldom absent.”

“As the people generally leave off work at five o'clock, I fancy half an hour later will enable most of those who have the will to be present; the bells will begin to chime at five, summoning the hearers gently homeward, for the hour of prayer.”

Soon after this conversation, Lord Westfield, who had been absent for some months, called to see Herbert, as the sky was illumined with sunset-clouds, and was informed that he was at the church.

“Is there a funeral?” asked he; “I heard the church-bells, but I thought the ringers were practising.”

“No, my lord,” replied the servant; “they are only chiming for the usual evening service.”

Hearing this, he rode on to the church, and, tying up his horse to the gate, entered soon after the prayers had commenced, and a pleasant sight he found it to be—aged men and women sat in the front benches, that they might hear the better; labourers, middle-aged and gray; some few, of a more youthful aspect; and cottagers' wives were also of the number, who had prepared the husband's supper, and left the eldest girl to mind the little ones, and keep an

eye to the boiling kettle. When the short service was concluded, the visitor felt that it was good for him to be there, and rejoiced again that his choice had been led to fall on so active and earnest a pastor.

"I shall never pass by again when I hear your evening bells, Mr. Howard," said he; "I hope the breeze will often waft their tones in my direction, and remind me of your hallowed hour." And often after that day, might the peer and the peasant have been seen kneeling side by side, at eventide, within Northwold church.

"Edith," said her brother, "I have found another deserving inmate for the almshouses, in an old woman who lives at the extreme end of the parish, yet is never missed from her seat at church; her name is Widow Clements. I find she does not return between the services, the distance being too great, but takes her scanty meal with her, and eats it at some neighbour's fireside, where she is ever welcomed, and, indeed, deservedly, for beside many a sick bed has she watched, and many a pillow has she smoothed for love—love to her fellow-creatures, springing from love to Him who has said: 'Inasmuch as

ye did it unto the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' ”

“ And from whom did you learn her history ? ” asked Edith.

“ From one well calculated to have the best information on the subject—our kind-hearted parish doctor ; he told me that he is ever well pleased to see Widow Clements in the sick room, for he knows that her gentle footstep will not wake the slumber so necessary to the recovery of the patient, and that her soft voice will soothe the irritation of fever. Her neighbours say that she has a wonderful way with her in nursing, and are sure that a blessing comes into the house with her.”

“ Exactly the type of the class of nurses I should like to have trained for illness, to take the place of Sisters of Charity, in our own church,” said Mabel Campbell, who had entered the room whilst Herbert was speaking ; “ but where did she come from ? I can hardly fancy her a native of these parts.”

“ Not very complimentary to Northwold,” he replied ; “ but I confess she is of a gentler mould than our cottage dames here, and came from a distant county many years ago. I visited her,

and heard some particulars of her tale from herself. Being left a widow with two children whilst they were very young, she had to quit a pleasant cottage, her first married home, and hire two rooms at a neighbour's house, and with much difficulty, by hard work, provided food for her little ones. Her only son turned out very wild, and ran away from his apprenticeship, and went to sea ; once she heard from him, but never again, and she supposes his vessel may have foundered, or that he has been washed overboard. Having a relative in this neighbourhood, she brought her girl down here, hoping sea-air might restore her health ; that it failed in doing, and she was laid in this churchyard ; but the bereaved mother sorrows not as one without hope, but looks forward to her child's glorious and happy resurrection."

"What a dear old woman ! I am sure she deserves a comfortable free roof over her head," said Edith. "I must go and find her out. I suppose she lives in that little cottage near the beach, which I have, unfortunately, so often found locked up, that I have given up going there. I dare say she has been at such times

absent on her errands of charity. Will you point her out to me on Sunday, Herbert?"

The following Sabbath the widow, in her black silk bonnet and scarlet cloak, was amongst the villagers wending their way to the parish church. It was a bright April morning, and the sun shone cheerily on the green turf. Before entering the gray porch Widow Clements went to a little mound, where primroses and violets were already shedding their fragrance over the little grave. Edith watched her, and knew it must be the proposed tenant of whom her brother had spoken in the previous week, and in a few moments the cottager and the lady of the Hall were conversing pleasantly.

After the second service, Edith proposed to her husband and brother to take a walk in the direction of the sea, "For," said she, "I can catch a glimpse of breakers, and love to gaze on a fine rough sea." They soon overtook Mabel Campbell and her nephew, young Montague, who was now on a short visit to his grandmother.

"You are on your way for the same object, I suppose, as ourselves—to watch the crested billows cast their spray against the shore?"

"Yes," replied Mabel; "but it is pleasanter to witness than to encounter. I am no sailor; I like a calm lake for practical experience."

"Not so I," observed her nephew, a fine grown youth of nearly eighteen summers—

"A wet sheet and a flowing sea,
A wind that follows fast;
Ay, give to me the snoring breeze
And the white waves heaving high."

"If I mistake not," said an old fisherman, who, with some of his companions, was contemplating the ocean and overheard the young man's remark; "if I mistake not this will be a night rough enough to suit you," for the old man deemed his word an idle boyish boast.

The weather was looking threatening. The sun was setting, blood red, behind a bank of angry clouds; the wind had sprung up; the waves dashed their foam against the shore, and the muffled roar among the pebbles all bespoke a tempestuous night.

The fishermen openly rejoiced that they were not going out, for it looked wild, as they termed it; indeed the wind was rising fast and the sky becoming heavier; the sea, no longer blue as in the morning, took its tone of colouring from the leaden clouds, and was dark and troubled.

As the party, warned by a few big drops that fell, turned homewards, young Montague for a moment freed himself from his aunt Mabel's arm, and, joining the group below, observed—

“Surely that is a distant speck on the horizon. Lend me your glass an instant. Yes,” continued he, “it is a vessel but too certainly, and the wind blows towards the land.”

He now returned to his friends and walked back to the village, but did not mention what he had seen, thinking it needless to put into the women's tender hearts painful ideas, by the suggestion of fellow-creatures being exposed to the coming storm.

After dinner was over, the midshipman again strolled to gaze upon the ocean, but the moon having gone behind the black clouds, he could descry nothing in the darkness of the night. He was about to retire to his room when a booming sound met his ear, and, hastily throwing on his sealskin coat, he quietly slipped out of the cottage.

Meanwhile at the Hall, as the roll of thunder was heard, amid the raging wind, Herbert exclaimed—

“If there should be any at sea this night near

our dangerous coast, I fear it will go hard with them. I feel such a longing to go down to the cliffs. Edith, you won't mind my going, you know I never take cold."

"I will not endeavour to hinder you, Herbert. You can be as safe there as here, I know, and perhaps you may have the strong wish given to you for some good purpose. But, Edward, indeed you must not attempt it, for your foot has not been well the last week, and you limped very much during our walk this afternoon, and were you, in the dark, to stumble on those cliffs, it might be serious."

"Well, I believe a lame man would only be in the way should there be anything to do, so I will submit."

The rector had only just left the Park when he met young Montague.

"What, Mr. Howard! I did not expect to have seen you out in such squally weather. It is not many landsmen who have a liking for it."

"I do not know that I have any, but I felt drawn towards the shore. God grant there are no poor souls exposed to it on the water!" said Herbert.

"But there are. I saw a sail on the horizon

this afternoon, and I fancied I heard other sounds than the wind."

Men were collected on the cliffs and along the beach, for, amidst the howling of the storm, signal guns of distress were heard pleading for help. The flashes of lightning which fitfully illumined the wide expanse of ocean, discovered to view a large ship about a mile off land—but how could assistance be rendered? The fishermen all agreed it would be madness to attempt it; had they indeed a life-boat they might be able to do something, but in one of their poor little vessels it would be worse than vain to think of it; yet as the guns again sounded solemnly and mournfully on their ears, how could they leave their fellow-creatures to perish?

At this moment of doubt and hesitation two other persons reached the place, Herbert and the young midshipman, and a manly voice called out—

"Is the boat ready, my brave fellows? Surely I am not too late."

"No boat of ours can weather such a storm," was the reply.

"What, will you let them sink into a watery

grave without one effort to save fellow-men—perhaps women and children? Will no man risk his life for them? Five guineas to the first who follows me.”

“We want no money—we will not go for gold,” was the answer of all.

“But,” said the old man who had addressed young Montague in rather scornful tones that afternoon, “Mr. Howard will never let such a stripling go. I ask your pardon for doubting you to-day, but what would kind Miss Campbell say if she knew of your rash venture?”

Mabel had taken a special interest amongst the fishermen’s families, and they returned the feeling now, for she had often spoken of the sailor nephew whom she loved so well.

“She would lay no obstacle in his way, but bid him God speed on his noble errand of mercy,” replied the deep, clear tones of Herbert. “She knows, and would tell you all, that the same Lord rules both sea and land, and into His holy keeping, as she would do, I commit him. Mr. Montague would not be worthy of wearing her Majesty’s uniform did he act otherwise than he is now doing, or hesitate to answer those calls for help ; but, hark ! the signal gun again !”

The boat was soon got ready, for, if that boy could trust himself on those angry waves, they could not do less than share his danger.

"If you are really resolved to venture, sir, you shall not want for companions," exclaimed the men, and now a dozen would have crowded into it, but the same youthful though firm voice was heard again—

"Enough, my friends. Six of you shall come, the others must remain, they may yet be wanted should our attempt fail; but fear not, God is with the brave."

A shout was raised as they left the shore; one moment they seemed engulfed by an enormous wave, but no, a flash of lightning shows them emerging from beneath it and riding high over another of gigantic form, and now darkness has hid them from sight.

Then did the pastor exhort all who could at present render no other aid, to join him in humble and fervent prayer to Him who could alone bless the efforts of the brave men, and bring them back in safety to the land with those whom they were gone to save. And many knelt around Herbert on that night, when they felt the presence of God in the signs of His

power and wrath, who had seldom, if ever, bent the knee before in prayer, and whose lips had too often uttered that name with curses and blasphemy.

On board the ill-fated vessel the scene is terrible beyond description. Already had many been washed overboard ; a falling mast has killed two and injured another ; the ship's boats have been launched, and, full of terrified men, over-crowded, have foundered within sight of the survivors, who, unable to gain a place there, are clinging to the ropes and sides of the wreck. One woman's shrieks can be heard above the storm. Terror has seized her wretched mind, laden with the sin and guilt of years. She feels that, like Jonah, she may well have raised the avenging tempest. She cannot pray, overwhelmed by recollections of cruelty to a parent, desertion of an orphan brother, unfaithfulness to the husband of her own choosing—his sins no longer, in this awful hour, availing to give her the false shadow of excuse for her own. To plunge and hide herself beneath the next wave that rolls in its fury against the feeble and shivering boards that bear her feet, would be her welcome refuge, could she believe that all

would then be over; but the voice which she has often laughed to scorn, grows louder, and will not be stifled now, and tells her that no resting-place will that deep afford her soul, for the sea will give up its slain; and so she clings to life as a respite from the terrors of a world to come. Near her, lashed to a spar, lies, fast approaching a state of insensibility, a sailor in the prime of manhood, but no cry of despair has crossed his lips; he, also, has sins not forgotten, but long since repented of, and he fears not to trust himself, soul and body, to Him who is a shelter from storms and dangers.

A long and anxious watch was kept on the shore; at last an answer came to the petition that had been offered there—the wind lulled, and from behind the black clouds shone forth the moon at intervals. The signal guns had ceased; surely the boat, then, may have reached the ship? Another gleam of light, and with the aid of the night glass, look! the masts are gone, but a dark speck is by the side of the vessel—it must be her; yes, they are right! And what are the feelings of the remaining crew? despair of earthly help had seized upon them, they thought themselves abandoned by

God and man, they never hoped to see another sun rise in this world, but their cries in the time of distress were heard by Him "whose mercy endureth for ever," and succour had come at their last extremity.

The ship was now fast going to pieces, and partly under water; some of the men were so exhausted by fatigue, and numbed by cold, that they had to be lifted into the boat. Young Montague, seeing a female's fluttering garment as he neared the vessel, gave orders she should be first saved, and himself rescued her from her perilous situation. This sudden relief to the terrors which had till then kept her every sense on the stretch, was overpowering, and she was laid swooning at the bottom of the boat by the side of the young sailor, who had been stunned by the crash of the mast. But all the survivors were now safe in this their little ark of refuge, and the rowers pulled back to the friendly shore with their precious burden—

"Not gems, nor gold, nor wealth untold,
But men, brave men, are there ;"

and in spite of many a heavy, angry wave, which, seemingly jealous of having lost its prey,

threatened to swamp the crowded bark, they reached the haven where they would be in safety, amidst the shouts and blessings of the crowd now collected on the beach, to witness and welcome their wonderful preservation.

“Oh, God! thou’st heard our prayer—
Hurrah! they’ve gained the shore!”

CHAPTER XX.

“The spirit broke
From its deep trance ere long—yet but awoke
To wander in wild dreams——

* * * * *
All lost ! and this is death !”

HEMANS.

To provide shelter for the shipwrecked mariners was the first care, and all vied in offering such as they could give, for the poor have warm and honest hearts, and often set an example to their richer neighbours in their kindness to, and acts of self-denial for, each other.

The sailor before mentioned, who it appeared had exerted himself with unceasing energy throughout the night, till struck by the mast, was now quite insensible from cold and exhaustion, and Herbert advised his being removed without delay to Widow Clement's cottage,

which was close at hand, as she had a spare room and was ever ready to bestow her good offices on any who stood in need of them. Gladly did she welcome the stranger, and an older seaman who appeared much attached to the young man, and had assisted in carrying him to the cottage, begged to remain and aid her in restoring him. The clean bed with its snowy coverlet and curtains was prepared, a bright fire soon glowed on the hearth, and warm food was made ready for their guests; the store was scanty, but, such as it was, was given with a willing heart; this her rector knew, but had sent up to the Hall for suitable refreshment, clothing, and other comforts for the crew of the unfortunate vessel.

Sir Edward Leslie also arrived with a conveyance, to carry to the Hall and village any for whom accommodation might not be found amongst the fishermen's dwellings. It was resolved that the lady, who, by aid of the remedies applied, was now reviving, should at once proceed in the carriage, and be placed under Edith's gentle care.

"Mr. Montague, pray return with us," said the Baronet; you require now to take some

thought for yourself, after your noble exertions, which have been so happily blessed."

"Thank you, but I prefer going home to Aunt Mabel, as ere this she will have discovered my absence, for all the village is roused, it seems. I am only going to bid Mrs. Clements to be especially careful of the young fellow we have left there, for I have taken a great fancy to him."

"Then I will not press my invitation; but pray remember that you have been some hours in your wet clothes."

"Oh, salt water never hurts a sailor—'a wet sheet and a flowing sea,' you know, is my motto and enjoyment," replied the young man; and after making some last inquiries, and distributing the contents of his purse with a British tar's accustomed generosity amongst the shipwrecked men, he proceeded with rapid strides down the lane, for he had still a brisk walk before him to Glen Cottage, and a tear of thankfulness stood in his manly eye, as the thought occurred to him that he might never have again crossed that path, or met his much-loved aunt and fond old grandmother, but for the hand of might and

mercy, which had preserved him through the perils of that night.

He had rightly divined that Miss Campbell would not remain ignorant of his absence. Indeed, she had discovered it almost immediately after he left the cottage; for, having felt disinclined to retire to rest till the storm should have abated in some degree, she entered his room for a volume he had been reading on the previous day. Finding that an hour elapsed, and still he returned not, she no longer doubted that he was gone to the beach, and hailing some men who passed along the road in front of the house, she inquired if they could give any tidings of her nephew, and learnt that he had headed the boat's crew for the attempted rescue of the sufferers on the wreck, and that they themselves were on their way back to the shore with restoratives and dry clothing from the Hall.

It would have best suited her dauntless spirit to have accompanied them thither, for activity and exertion best checks anxiety, but her duty lay in patient waiting now, for her mother must be the first consideration, since the gentle old lady possessed not her daughter's iron nerves, and

was peculiarly timid in a thunder-storm, and therefore was not likely to rest if left alone in her room; so there Mabel immediately repaired with her book, and remained till Mrs. Campbell's eyes were closed in profound slumber. The time of suspense and, to her, painful quietness, she spent in fervent prayer for the preservation of William Montague, and all those who were in such imminent peril.

When liberated from her watch in her mother's room, Mabel's energy found employment in piling up more wood, in order to keep a good fire in her nephew's sleeping apartment, and in making other preparations for his comfort, if it pleased God to bring him back in safety. The kitchen was explored, the kettle brought up stairs, and soon set boiling, and when everything was done, she put on her bonnet and shawl, and went to watch at the gate, for the morning was dawning bright and clear, as if in mockery of the late violent storm.

As the carriage passed along towards the Hall, Sir Edward Leslie saw a woman's figure in the little garden, and bidding the driver stop, stepped out to cheer her with good news respecting young Montague.

“He is a noble fellow. The whole village is mad about him; and I trust his wet clothes are the only damage he has sustained, which you will soon remedy. I must not loiter, as I am carrying home one of the sufferers for Edith to nurse; but I could not leave you in suspense, or forego the pleasure of being the first to congratulate you on the possession of such a nephew, of whom you may indeed well be proud; and now, adieu.”

The gallant midshipman soon after arrived to confirm these happy tidings, and rejoice the heart of one who had watched over, from his earliest infancy, with feelings akin to maternal love, the orphan child of her poor sister. Mrs. Campbell only heard of her grandson's danger, at the same time as of his courage, when seated next morning at the breakfast-table, she could see and know for herself that he was safe and sound.

Meanwhile, nothing had been forgotten at the Hall by Edith, for the reception of the female sufferer, of whose presence amongst the rescued mariners her brother had informed her by a messenger, soon after they reached the land.

When the carriage drove up to the entrance,

she was ready to receive, with woman's tender sympathy, the unfortunate stranger, who was already very feverish, bearing the symptoms of severe illness, brought on by terror, exposure, cold, and wet clothes.

A warm bed was prepared, the invalid undressed and placed in it, with every comfort that thought and kindness could devise.

"Edward, I am sure Mr. Hamilton should be sent for immediately, I think the poor creature's senses are wandering. Now she looks on me so strangely, as if spell-bound, and then hides her face, as if to shield me from her gaze, and starts at even the low tones of my voice."

"He shall be summoned at once. Ring the bell, and I will write a note for the groom to take, begging his immediate attendance," replied her husband.

"Is not Herbert returned yet?" asked Edith. "I suppose he is resolved to see all the poor men housed comfortably before he leaves them. Oh, that is his step, I am sure," and rushing out, she met her brother in the entrance hall, and a fond embrace was exchanged between the two loving hearts.

"How is your patient?" he inquired. "She

appears to be a bad subject for such trials as this night's horrors have portrayed."

"Yes, I fear so; she is rapidly becoming delirious, and Edward has sent off for the doctor. I hope he will soon arrive, as I am quite at a loss what to do; the servants say she manifests symptoms of violence, and my presence evidently excites her, which is most unfortunate."

The illness increased, notwithstanding all the efforts Mr. Hamilton used to check its course; and at the close of the day, when he again visited the sick woman, he shook his head.

"She may regain consciousness at the last extremity possibly, but I believe it to be a case without hope of recovery. I should imagine she must have been suffering from ruined health before this sad occurrence took place. Cold and wet, combined with terror, have brought on fever, and inflammation has ensued, on a constitution peculiarly susceptible to its attacks."

"Have you any clue to her name or position?" asked Mabel Campbell, who, on hearing of Edith's distress, had offered any assistance in her power.

"No. The wet clothes which were sent to

the laundry, were not marked; her handkerchief is in her hand."

Mabel gently released it from the grasp, and on examination, found a coronet, with the name of "Castleton" at one corner of the delicately embroidered cambric, and beckoning her friend out of the room, she showed them to her.

"A strange coincidence truly, is this," she exclaimed, "that Montague should have saved from a watery grave, though apparently only to fill one on land, the very woman whose wealth formed the bait to the worthless nobleman to desert his mother, and hardly less strange, that after so many years of scorn towards you, she should be dependent on your charitable kindness, for the alleviation of a dying bed."

"Poor, proud Eleanor!" sighed the pitying Edith. "I last heard that she had been living in Italy, so I suppose she was on her way from thence to England."

"Has she any family?" asked Mabel Campbell.

"I have been so little acquainted with her proceedings for many years, that I do not know. Edward told me he had heard some time ago, that she had lost several children, and that

those then living had been removed by Lord Castleton, when they separated by mutual consent."

When this discovery was imparted by Edith to her husband and brother, they remarked that probably Eleanor Castleton had in a confused manner recognized her features, which might have caused the excitement manifested in her presence.

Mabel Campbell watched that night, and fancying some symptoms of consciousness appeared, sent information of it to Herbert, as it was previously agreed between them, who quickly was at the bedside to offer up prayers, in the hope that the sufferer might understand, and perhaps join in spirit, if unable to utter the words of supplication ; but the averted head and restless sighs, accompanied now and then with a groan, as of mental anguish, were but poor encouragement to the young clergyman, indeed, the only signs she gave, were evidently to dissuade him from continuing that which gave no comfort to her tortured spirit. Scripture promises of mercy to true penitence were received with moans, and a movement of the head too despairing in its misery to witness without sending deep and bitter pangs of sorrow to the heart of

the beholder. That dying bed was such a scene of horror as the pastor had never yet witnessed, during his four years' experience, even amongst much of sin and suffering in the crowded district of his early curacy.

Before the next Sabbath, the mortal remains of Eleanor Castleton were laid in the church-yard, and as the orphan brother, whom that late proud, heartless woman had neglected, read over her grave the church service, small comfort or hope did he dare to gather from it on her behalf.

But let us turn to a happier picture, and, going back to the morning after the shipwreck, look in on widow Clements and her charge. She had insisted on the elder seaman, who had accompanied him, taking her bed, whilst she kept watch by the young sailor, whose hands and feet she continued to chafe, applying such remedies as she considered best to his numbed limbs. On the parish doctor's arrival, he found, as usual, that nurse Clements had forestalled him, and done everything that was right, and he gave his opinion that when the circulation and general warmth returned, the patient would fall into quiet, refreshing sleep, from which he

would probably awake almost, if not quite well. His predictions were soon after verified, and as his nurse listened to the gentle breathing, she felt satisfied that all was now well.

Leaving the door ajar, that she might hear any sound or movement, she busied herself in making preparations for the morning's frugal meal—a nice brown loaf, a small piece of butter, and some milk, spread on a coarse but snowy cloth—and then returned to the little bed-chamber. The sun had risen, and notwithstanding the dimity curtain across the casement, the light streamed into the room.

She sat down; the sleeper turned his head, and as the hair fell back, which before partly hid his face, she looked at him, and strange feelings came over her. Where had she before gazed on those features? surely they were not unknown. Another movement of the sailor, and his curly locks fell back from the left temple, discovering a scar.

A scene of years gone by passed rapidly before her mind, when a bright, curly-haired boy and his sister were at play together, by the mountain side; how her now lost Mary had wished for a bright flower on the hill, beyond

her reach ; how the brother, though wilful and wild, yet ever fond and loving to his gentle sister, had climbed the bank to gather the desired blossom, and had, in returning, placed his foot on a loosened fragment, which gave way, precipitating him headlong on some sharp stones in the little brook which flowed beneath, and thereby cutting open his temple, but still in the fall he saved the flower, and exclaimed, on seeing his little playmate's terror, "Never mind, Mary, don't be frightened at the blood, it does not hurt me much, and is no matter, for here I have got the pretty flower safe for you."

Wild hope now filled her throbbing breast—could it be? oh, surely, yes! it is no other; and as the sailor opened his eyes, and looked on his kind nurse, hope became certainty—her long lost, much loved son, lay before her. On these first sacred moments of deep joy we will not intrude, whilst the widowed and long desolate mother and her son, restored to each other's arms, wept tears of grateful happiness.

When Mabel Campbell and her nephew called at the cottage that morning, they heard the happy tale.

"And, ma'am," exclaimed the rejoicing and now happy widow, "what is best of all, the old seaman tells me that my son, once so wild, is now as steady a man as ever trod the deck, and an example of what a Christian and a British sailor should be."

"This may well cheer your heart, Mrs. Clements, and most heartily do we congratulate you on having so worthy a son restored to you."

"But how can I ever tell Mr. Montague of half the gratitude my very soul is overflowing with, for rescuing my child? Blessings on his gallant heart, for the comfort he has brought to me, and many besides! But where is he?"

"He slipped out to find your son, and to run away from your praises, I dare say, for he can't bear his last night's act to be so much talked about, it makes him feel ashamed, he says, as he has done nothing more than his duty."

"Yet I doubt if any of the poor creatures would have ever touched land but for him, though the men here are kind-hearted fellows enough; they just wanted a leader, and did not think the attempt possible, till his brave young spirit would have it done."

As the proud aunt and happy nephew walked to the Hall, where the former was going to assist Edith, the young man said—

“ I must speak to Sir Edward—there should be some better means of saving life on this rocky coast ;” and meeting that gentleman in the Park, he took the first opportunity of doing so.

“ Do not you think a life-boat should be procured, to be in readiness on this dangerous shore, in case of other shipwrecks occurring ?”

“ Certainly, and I am much obliged to you for the suggestion, Mr. Montague ; at this moment, so soon after this affair, I do not think there would be much doubt of obtaining one, with the assistance of the neighbourhood.”

“ Rockets are also most useful, and on application may be had, free of expense, from the government, when it can be shown that the coast is one likely to afford danger to ships, and there can be no difficulty in proving that clearly in this locality, for the fishermen tell me there are very many wrecks every year on these headlands.”

“ I will apply to the proper authorities without delay for them, and mention that, in your

opinion, they are requisite, for more heed, probably, may be given to the recommendation of a naval man, though but a young one, than to mine, being unversed in, and unconnected with, nautical affairs," remarked Sir Edward; "besides, they shall know of the part you took in last night's enterprise, which was worthy of a far older and more experienced seaman, and your age may remain unmentioned."

"I fear a midshipman's suggestion is not likely to carry much weight with such important public functionaries; but a very cursory inquiry will soon satisfy any one of the necessity which really exists, and which induces your application," rejoined young Montague.

"I should like to present the brave fellows, who, under your leading, so well succeeded in the gallant rescue, with some substantial expression of my estimation of their conduct, but I fancy, if made more publicly as a memorial, with the names affixed of the principal people in the immediate neighbourhood, it would give greater pleasure to the recipients; and I am sure that there are many who would gladly testify their sense of the merit of the noble

deed, by contributing a trifle to a fund for that purpose."

"Oh, yes," replied the young sailor; "I should imagine there would be little or no difficulty in raising a very handsome sum, and, after all, it is not so much the amount as the motive for the gift, which will form its value to those concerned."

"To you we must appeal for the proportionate merits of the men, since, as a stranger here, your decision would be readily believed to be an impartial one," said Sir Edward Leslie.

"Really, I should be sorry to be called upon to give any judgment on such a delicate point. Surely, to make any distinction would be invidious, when all acted so well; besides, ill-feeling might thereby be engendered amongst those now bound together by the same occupations, and by a fellowship in a noble cause."

"I believe you are right," observed the Baronet; "it would certainly be a great pity to raise jealousy between them, and thus tarnish the virtue of their good action, and I shall act upon your opinion accordingly, by letting all six share alike in the reward."

"Might it not be well to gain the signa-

tures of all those rescued from the wreck, before they take their departure from this place?" proposed young Montague; "their testimony, I think, would at once be important and gratifying to the fishermen."

"By all means, and will be given most gladly and thankfully by the poor fellows, most of whom have no other means of expressing their sense of the obligation they have incurred."

The anticipations of the two gentlemen were not destined to be disappointed; a large subscription was speedily raised, chiefly by means of shilling, and even penny contributions, and afforded much pleasure and gratification to the recipients.

Sir Edward Leslie did not neglect to inform both Colonel Cameron and the captain of William Montague's ship, of his gallant conduct, and of the high admiration it had excited.

CHAPTER XXI.

"Thou hast kept thy faith with the faithful dead.

* * * * *
With the father's blessing o'er thee,
With the mother's trusting eye."

HEMANS.

ON the following Sunday, curiosity led many to Northwold church, to see the long row of graves, for many bodies had been washed on shore the days following the wreck, and found sepulture in the little village burial-ground. There was also a general expectation that the rector would not pass by unnoticed the stirring events of the last week. Nor were they doomed to disappointment, for Herbert felt strongly that it would be an opportunity to speak a word in season to many, perhaps to some who had never before darkened the doors of a place of worship.

The church was more than full ; the porch and all standing ground was occupied, and the pastor, when he saw this throng of human souls, felt the greatness of the responsibility of that moment, and sought, with a fervency of spirit almost greater than he had ever before experienced, for grace to touch their hearts, and that he might have given him, at that hour, power and wisdom of speech, to convince his hearers. He took for his subject the words of the Psalmist: "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters, these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep."

Of those that heard him not a few had witnessed the rising of the stormy wind, some had seen the waves mount up to the heavens and go down again to the depths, and truly their souls had melted because of trouble, and they had, indeed, been at their wit's end ; the lips that had never before uttered words of prayer then had owned the mighty arm that governed the raging of the tempest, and in the hour of fear and distress, had called upon the Lord of the ocean, and the storm He made a calm, "so that the waves thereof were still." Was any there

present who saw and yet believed not? hard must be that heart. "Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and declare the wonders that He doeth for the children of man."

The young rector's tones were of thrilling earnestness, and his fervency riveted the attention of his congregation. He preached as village pastors ought to address a village flock; no word was used that the most unlearned amongst them could not understand. It was the language of the heart, clothed in the simplest form, and yet made interesting by plain but attractive illustrations suitable to their comprehension. As one of his parishioners went home, he said to his wife—

"Sally, I mean to go to church from this time forward. Mr. Howard speaks from his very soul, and uses no bigger or harder words than the chapel preacher, and he seems to have a sort of authority to teach us better than Mr. Jones. I mean to be oftener inside those walls than I have ever been before."

This clear and simple style had not been acquired without much painstaking, for it is much easier to write a sermon in fine, high-sounding language than to weigh every expression care-

fully, and to consider what word will carry, most intelligibly, the idea desired to be imparted, and this is, doubtless, the cause why so many excellent soundly doctrinal discourses, though full of saving truths and knowledge, fail to produce the effect hoped and desired.

Much surprise would be felt if an investigation were instituted as to the amount comprehended by the poor of what they hear in church; it is sadly small, almost incredibly so, excepting to those who are at the trouble to ascertain the real fact. You perhaps hear the praise accorded that Mr. So-and-so is a beautiful preacher, and infer, not altogether unreasonably, that it is an appreciation of the subject and merits of his sermons which calls forth this remark, but though you may not, on inquiry, be met with the reply really once made—"It is so beautiful, but I don't presume to understand it," yet you will too often find that the loud, sonorous voice, or the action and energy, form the true basis of the commendation bestowed, whilst little, if any, idea is gathered of the lessons purposed to be taught, and thus this powerful means of teaching the way of salvation is in so many cases lost.

The season for building having now set in,

no time was suffered to elapse in commencing operations in the field designed for the almshouses. The young plantations were doing well; and the foundations being prepared on a fine day in the end of April, Edith by her husband's and brother's wish laid the first stone, Herbert invoking a blessing on the undertaking; no courtly throng were there to mar the offering by any outward show or seeming vain glory—the Campbells, the school children and their teachers, and a few old people who hoped there to find an asylum for their age and feebleness, together with the men to be employed in the work, composed the assembly. When the little ceremony was over, one other was found to have been present, having heard of the event—and this was Herbert's kind and noble patron, who cordially addressing Mr. Howard, observed—

“I have heard that there is no longer room for those who wish to hear the words of truth and life from your lips; remember, I shall be ready to contribute towards the erection of a church more suitable to the size of the parish, whenever you desire it; I will promise one thousand pounds, and all the stone necessary

from my quarry, and more shall be forthcoming if required."

Herbert's joy was so great that he could not adequately express the feelings of gratitude and thankfulness which filled his heart, not only to his kind friend, but also to Him who had put into his mind such a desire for the promotion of His honour and glory.

It was agreed that a good ecclesiastical architect should be first selected who should prepare plans and drawings to be submitted to the chief subscribers. The churchyard being now quite filled, the consecration of a fresh burial ground would be immediately necessary.

"Why, then," asked Herbert, one day when the subject was under discussion, "should not another site be chosen? thus obviating the inconvenience of being without a place of worship during the building of our new church, for I am told very little of the materials of the old would come into use, and I shall feel most reluctant to disperse my parishioners just as they are rallying round me."

"That is an important consideration," replied Lord Westfield; "but Lady Leslie will quarrel with us if we remove the church from the alms-

houses which she is erecting, with the special object of their immediate proximity to the house of God."

"Certainly I shall ; but would not the field on the left of my cottages be as good a place as any other—such an arrangement would remove my objections?"

"If you, my lord, approve the place my wife has named, I shall be most happy to contribute the land necessary for both church and graveyard," said Sir Edward.

"I think it a very good proposition," was the reply ; "and as the ground falls rapidly to the left, the situation will be much less bleak than the existing one, which certainly is in winter most bitterly cold."

"I know of only one possible cause for complaint," remarked Herbert ; "namely, that the present church is a sea-mark to the mariners ; but that might be obviated by allowing the tower to remain, only taking down the other parts, when the new one is ready for the performance of divine service."

And thus it was finally arranged.

The weather, which admitted of all these important and interesting building preparations,

was equally favourable to the accomplishment of the repairs, alterations, and formation of the new bow-window at the little parsonage. Painting, papering, and all the requisite fitting up, proceeded rapidly; the pretty new furniture had been chosen in London, with the aid of its future mistress's taste, and Edith undertook to arrange it, and see that many little trifles so necessary to comfort, and which enhance in such a great measure the general appearance of a house, were not neglected. Herbert, as a bachelor, confessed himself very ignorant of most of these lesser requirements, though none could better appreciate such than himself, both with the eye and in the actual enjoyment of them when there.

The time for the Langley wedding drew near, and of course Edith and her husband could not be spared on such a day; nor, indeed, would they willingly have foregone the pleasure and delight of being present on this joyful occasion, so fraught with interest to the sister who had made Herbert's welfare her primary earthly object, and who, in his marriage with her beloved friend and former favourite pupil, saw the consummation of her best and brightest hopes.

She believed her mission on his behalf would then be at an end ; as in Alice he would not only have a gentle, loving wife, but also a companion to help him in all his high and holy duties, one who, running the same course of holy faith, would steadfastly follow and urge him onwards in the heavenly race before them,

"Till like twin stars, with even pace
Each lucid course be duly sped."

Having witnessed the happy union of the two so especially dear to her, and joined in the festivities which made Langley a scene of mirth and gladness on that day, Edith did not long tarry there, though the Harcourts much wished to detain her, as she and Sir Edward were anxious to return to Northwold, in order that they might superintend the rejoicings to be celebrated in honour of the joyous event of their young rector's wedding.

Annie Harcourt still remained the delicate invalid, but was now cheerful and resigned, and her health being sufficiently improved to allow of exertion in many ways, she considered herself the daughter appointed to provide for her parents' comforts and cheer their home, whilst gradually their other children were forming new

ties and connexions; and Annie felt grateful a power was now placed in her hands, to strive by unwearied attention, combined with filial tenderness and affection, to compensate in some trifling measure for the anxiety and distress her early wilfulness had caused to those who had deserved so far differently from her. She had completed her younger sisters' education, and was now their kind companion and gentle adviser. Being released from the duties of instructress, and her health having become sufficiently strong to allow her to leave home, it was decided that she should accept Edward and Edith Leslie's pressing invitation to return to Northwold with them, and spend a few weeks in that neighbourhood. No longer the selfish, pleasure-seeking girl of former days, she would have denied herself this enjoyment, fearing lest the blank of two daughters' absence might be felt so much the more heavily; but Mr. and Mrs. Harcourt having promised at this time to visit some near relations, together with their two youngest, Amy and Flora, Annie no longer felt any scruple at accompanying her friends, and anticipated much pleasure from the proposed change.

On their arrival, she entered as far as her strength would permit into the festivities given by Sir Edward and Lady Leslie, to celebrate the late auspicious event. Amongst which were cricket matches, succeeded by suppers, with good, old English fare, beef and plum pudding; school feasts with nearly a hundred happy little faces enjoying every imaginable innocent sport, and when fairly tired, sitting down in the hay-field to abundant supplies of tea, cake, and fruit; concluding their pleasant day by raising their young voices in an evening hymn of praise to the Giver of all our happiness, be it great or small. Nor were the sick or aged forgotten, portions were sent to each that all might share in the general joy.

Early in August, tidings were received of the travellers' intended return home. The tour through the Lakes and in Scotland had been a great pleasure to both, but especially to Alice, who had seen the beauties of nature only as shown at Langley and Northwold, and who had longed to trace the course of Scott's entrancing pen. These wishes were now realized, and she had lingered on Loch Katrine; had stood on Ellen's Isle, and had pointed out to her each charmed

spot, by the old boatman, thus making it seem as nothing less than matter of history. She had visited also, with unbounded delight, many of those glorious scenes which are so vividly depicted by the immortal poet and novelist: Lochleven Castle, with its many interesting associations of the hapless queen, so long a captive there; the plain of Bannockburn—the field of glory of the patriot Bruce; and that kingly residence, Stirling Castle, so fraught with historic interest, and from whose towers so many spots associated with Scotland's struggles and victorious arms can be discerned.

They had gazed on the varied scenery of Loch Lomond; had viewed with wonder, and seen the wild sublimity of the rugged defile of Glencoe, and penetrated to the storied Western Isles of Staffa and Iona; nor had the fair city so justly turned the Athens of the North, and now so famed for arts as once for arms, been passed unheeded by. Great was the delight of both at the unequalled beauty of its position—on one side its spacious streets bordered with noble structures, on the other those quaint antique houses, rearing aloft their projecting fronts, so as wellnigh to exclude the light of

day from the dark, mysterious alleys, which divide them ; long did they linger by the gloomy, massive walls of its royal palace and commanding fortress, each rendered immortal by associations of a thousand years, of history or romance—each, too, the scene of many a dark deed of treachery and revenge, as well as of the noblest glories of Scotland's ancient chivalry and renown.

These pleasures were fully enjoyed, yet both travellers were nothing loath to bend their steps homewards, where many duties and much true happiness in the performance of such, they trusted, awaited them.

"I think, Annie, everything is ready now at the parsonage," said Edith, late in the afternoon of the day which was to witness the return of the young couple to Northwold.

"I have desired the servants to have a substantial tea prepared, according to Alice's wish ; and, as we may expect them by six o'clock, I propose that we put away our work, and fetch our bonnets, that we may be there to greet them."

"I will order the pony-chaise to be at the

door in half-an-hour, if you like," observed her husband, "as Annie must not tire herself by walking, this hot day."

"Thank you, Edward, that will certainly be the best arrangement."

When they reached the rectory it looked most inviting; and, as Annie remarked, "those must indeed be pitied who could not make themselves happy in such a pleasant abode."

Little time, however, was left for the discussion of its various merits, before a carriage drove up with Herbert and his fair wife, both looking bright and well. It was, indeed, a happy evening for the little party assembled at Northwold Rectory. Much that was pleasing and interesting was heard and told on both sides; while the young Pastor and his Alice expressed the delight which they felt on returning to a spot already dear to them by some blissful associations, and gilded with the bright hopes of future usefulness and pleasures in the sphere appointed to them.

As they strolled back that lovely summer's eve to the Hall, the brother and sister arm in arm, a little behind the others, Herbert endea-

voured to give expression, from a heart overflowing with gratitude and deepest affection, to his sense of his vast debt to that beloved sister. On approaching the gate where the little company were to separate to return to their several homes, he added—

“Dearest Edith, how well and faithfully have you fulfilled, not only the letter, but the spirit of your promise, to my poor mother. My earthly joys and hopes of heavenly happiness, I owe, under God, to you alone; and in this crowning blessing, a loving, gentle, and most able helpmate, whom have I chiefly to thank, if not yourself, for training such an excellent wife for me? no words can ever speak my grateful love; but you will not fail to receive a reward, I feel assured, in your own domestic happiness, and in the sweet consciousness of an arduous responsibility so well and ably discharged.”

“I have now, dear Herbert, an ample recompense, far above my deserts, in beholding you such as you are; thank God, to whom we are indebted for all this comfort and joy, and through whom alone we must ever remember

the strength and power has been given to fulfil that which, so many years ago, was made in simple dependence on His guidance and assistance—'The Sister's Vow.' ”

THE END.



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